

**SALEM SHARED---THE SAGA TOLD:
THE MISSION HISTORY of SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH,
WHITTIER, CALIFORNIA**

**A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry**

**by
Lee Bradford Rozen**

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This professional project, completed by

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*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Abstract

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Whittier, California

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Lee Bradford Rozen

The nearly fifty years of mission history of Salem Lutheran Church, Whittier, California, has not been told and needs to be adequately written. The parish has a story that is interesting and is a paradigm of a post-World War II, Southern California, mainline Protestant parish. But like so many mainline Protestant parishes founded during that bustling time, the story is rapidly becoming forgotten.

This project reveals selected topics, issues, historical moments and aspects that tell the story of this part of Christ's Church. When one understands and knows the history of a parish, it gives the parish members--lay and clergy--a sense of direction and mission for continuity. The Church is a part of history, and history is a part of the Church.

Salem Lutheran Church needs to create and celebrate its active mission history so that the members of the parish will have a better sense of who they are, what they are doing, where they are going, and why.

Selected aspects of Salem's history are explained. The project is documented and developed by means of available parish archival documents, memorabilia, oral interviews of parish members, library resources, and personal reflections and notes of the present pastor who is the writer of this story.

The writer uses these resources and critically evaluates the parish's ministry and history with all its triumphs, struggles, and inevitable changes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This Doctor of Ministry project is dedicated to the faithful members of Salem Lutheran Church, Whittier, California, past, present, and future.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I recently celebrated my fiftieth birthday. And for me it is a time of personal and professional accounting.

In two years, Salem Lutheran Church, Whittier, California, will be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary of organization. The parish is planning a special observance. A fiftieth birthday is a milestone. For humans to attain the age of fifty years means that a person is absolutely middle aged. A person is no longer young, but a person is not old either. At the age of fifty years a person is "not wet behind the ears," and neither is a person "ready for the rocking chair." Fifty years of age is a time of respectability.

When a person attains the half-century mark, a celebration, a party, commemorates this achievement. Festivity is in order. So, too, is reflection. Many times at a fiftieth birthday event, a "This Is Your Life" story is told by someone who knows, cares, and loves the honored person. It means more to have someone "in the know" do the sharing. This may involve much research. It is a labor of love. It is not the job of a stranger. During this time of sharing, specific moments, events, places, and characters are highlighted. The past is brought into the present. It may be a time of reflection and questioning. What have I done? What still do I wish to do?

When I had the opportunity of tracing my roots, reviewing the places and people of my family's story, their saga, I visited their respective parish churches. It was very meaningful to me to see where my maternal grandparents were baptized, confirmed and married in Norway, and the same for my paternal grandparents in their parishes in Poland. It was humbling to tour the parish building(s). The Lutheran pastors and Catholic priests invited me into their offices. They showed me the records, the registers, and the nicely bound written copies of the histories of each parish. I was impressed and delighted to know that these churches, although many hundreds of years older than Salem Church, each had a story, a history, that was told, and that was written for posterity to use. The congregational histories were known by these clergy. They were appreciated by Christian clergy. These ministers of Christ used them as resources for their present day challenges and needs. The histories of the four parishes were published and were in the homes of parishioners or other interested individuals. The roots of each parish were known and appreciated. Every so often these histories were brought up to date by either a member of the parish clergy or by an interested lay person in the parish. This is because the story of Christ's Church continues. It continues and is written in Norway, in Poland, and in other places all around the world. It continues on in Whittier, California, too.

Each parish, as each individual, has its own unique history and story, its community myth. This story reflects a community awareness about who it is, where it has been and where it is going. It is the saga of Christ's people as they

fit into the long winding stream of witnesses. A parish's story is what gives it purpose and identity, and a continuity of past, present, and future. A parish with a recorded history sets its goals better.

A study of the history of any portion of the Church of God offers an opportunity for present members of that congregation to reflect upon a microcosm of God's work in the world among His people, a microcosm of which they are a part. The study of the history of a particular congregation, noticing the flow of events and their consequences, of decisions and their results, will offer the people of that particular congregation an unusual insight into how God has dealt with them as part of the continuing historic Covenant people, a story which begins in the opening pages of the Old Testament and continues to the present. A community of people gathered to be the Church because they are called by God, sharing their obedience or disobedience to that call and their understanding or lack of understanding of their mission.

The study of the history of a parish offers each individual who has been a part of that history, for a long time or a short time, an opportunity to reflect on his or her own spiritual pilgrimage during that history. And by doing this, the Church sees itself as each individual beholds the assembly of which he or she is a part and perceives the degree of understanding, belief, obedience, and faithfulness that each has experienced.

When someone tries to locate the histories of congregations in Southern California in parish libraries, seminaries, synod archives, or in parishioners' homes the selection is almost nonexistent. In fact it is deplorable! Not many

histories have been written or are being written.

A recent letter from the Cincinnati Historical Society staff historian, Geoffrey Giglierano, tells why he finds Lutheran archives and parish histories quite inadequate. He wrote:

I cannot stress enough the importance of what you are doing. In the course of producing the new Cincinnati Guide--a major collection of urban histories of the communities that make up our metropolitan area--*we have been frequently frustrated by a lack of data from certain denominations, including Lutherans. Some churches, particularly Roman Catholic and Jewish synagogues almost invariably have excellent archives and so can be discussed more thoroughly in a historical work.*

The history of a community's church is more than just lists of pastors and descriptions of structures. They are important institutions that people create to serve a variety of functions, and those functions change as the surrounding community changes. A church is shaped by the community it serves, and in turn has an impact on those people that it serves. Such institutions have histories that help to illuminate and aid us in understanding the context in which they existed.¹

Martin Marty, noted ELCA historian, also comments on the lack of concern of many Lutherans for history. Marty asks:

Do we have a history? Don't we read books? Is history a problem, an embarrassment since our mothers and fathers never turn out to be consistent the way dogma-minded folks like to make them out to be? Were we too busy being honest passive citizens to get actively involved?

Maybe we have been historyless people in the public sense, but we do have stories, funny, tragic, happy, sad, faithful, half-faithless. The new social history may help find the stories. . . .

¹ Geoffrey Giglierano, "Lack of Data in Lutheran Archives Frustrates Historian," Mission West, 1988, 4.

To appreciate history and then not make it or keep it or write it, or read it suggests that there are opportunities ahead, discoveries to make. More sure of who we are, we might better respond to the call of God to make history in our own day.²

Salem Church has a history. This project tells the story, the saga, of Salem Lutheran Church, Whittier, California. Saga is a Norse word that is a narrative of achievements and events in the history of a family or social group. The term is appropriate in remembering the Nordic roots of many Lutheran parishes in the United States. This work does not concentrate on page after page of mere dates, or financial charts, or attendance graphs. It describes the development, goals, challenges, disappointments, and hopes for the future of the parish's mission, describing the challenges and accomplishments, of a post-World War II, suburban Southern California, mainline Protestant parish, a paradigm of those times. The story continues into the present time for it is a paradigm, now, too, but a different one. Many changes in the parish and the community have taken place.

Salem Church's story is fragmented, stored in cupboards, metal file cabinets, and in boxes, here and there, and in the memories of parishioners. It has not been adequately written down. The story is partially told by certain booklets, minutes, reports, and other material. But this is not enough. It needs to be recorded and told while there still are two of the three pastors alive, and while early members of the parish are still able to inject their memories and recollections into the story. Already, the opportunity has passed to speak with

² Martin Marty, "A Challenge From Historian Dr. Martin Marty," Mission West, 1988, 2.

any Charter Roll members in the parish. They have either died or are out of the area.

This project will correct that omission, or that unintentional neglect. This project will be my edifice. It will be my building dedicated to the work of spreading of the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ through the telling of the saga of Salem Church, Whittier: a parish with a mission, a role, for almost fifty years in the life of an American suburban community still undergoing much change.

I am concerned that if the story is not told up to the present time with accuracy and purpose, it will not be told. It is important to have this historical awareness for a sense of direction and mission for continuity. The Church is a part of history, and history is a part of the Church.

I want to write the story; I want to tell the saga. I am very much a part of this story, with its joyous and difficult times, and its rewards and failures. It is my birthday gift; an early one, for my parish's fiftieth anniversary. I am the one "in the know," the loved one telling Salem's "This Is Your Life!" story.

To present this story I have used parish and synod archival materials, library research, the oral interviews of present congregational members, and my own personal reflections and notes. At the conclusion of each chapter I shall comment and analyze the subject matter and the main topics discussed. Thereby explaining the story of mission.

The project is divided into seven chapters. Following the "Introduction," Chapter 2, "Building for Mission," describes how a congregation was formed

and built a church. It is a brief synopsis of the stages of the acquisition of the church property, the various buildings constructed, and their reasons for being constructed. The chapter seeks to find the answers to why there was so much activity, so rapidly. Also, the chapter reviews the goals and mission of the parish during those beginning years.

Chapter 3, "Leadership Styles of the Pastors," gives a comparison of the three pastors who have led the parish in its mission. The pastors are compared as to their different challenges, their responses, their main roles, and their methods of operation. Their similarities and differences are told. This chapter is divided as follows: "Gerberding---Missionary and Founder"; "Robison---Builder and Chaplain"; and "Rozen---Celebrant and Connector."

Chapter 4, "The Ministry of the Laity," describes how the non-ordained have seen and performed their own witness for Christ. The chapter tells the story of their mission tasks and challenges. It shares how the laity serve together in Salem Church and use their Christian ministry in everyday life situations at home, school and work places. Included in this chapter are areas of lay ministry that are especially active and strong. But there are also areas which show weakness in lay ministry. The future goals of the laity and their implementation are also discussed.

Chapter 5, "Salem's Worship Life," relates the message of the Gospel as it is taught, expressed, and shared in the rich worship life of Salem Church. The chapter reviews the process of the education of the people to the church's mission through various aspects of liturgical worship. The Lutheran

Church is a liturgical denomination. The issue addressed in this chapter will be the influence of worship on the lives of the parishioners, parish activities, service opportunities, and challenges. Reviewed also is whether Salem Church's faithfulness to its Lutheran roots is complemented by experimentation and fresh approaches. Have the parish's efforts to combine the traditional with the contemporary been successful and meaningful?

Chapter 6, "Ecumenical Awareness," is nothing new for Salem Church. The parish has been ecumenically involved from its beginnings. This involvement and awareness has grown steadily. Some of the best experiences are shared. The chapter also describes how these occasions of reflection, study, celebration, confrontation, and sharing, have been beneficial lessons in the true mission and makeup of the whole Body of Christ.

Chapter 7, "Conclusion," presents a brief review of all the previous chapters and how they are part of the story, the saga, of Salem Lutheran Church. This chapter also shares the challenges of the parish's mission and goals for the future in a rapidly changing community and world.

Will there be a fiftieth birthday celebration for Salem? Of course there will be! It will be shared and celebrated with even more spirit and joy, for now we know the story, the saga of who we are, where we have been, and where we are going.

CHAPTER 2

Building for Mission

The Harvest Ripe

The atomic age began with the end of World War II. The United States and her allies had been victorious over Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. There was victory, but true peace was elusive. Soon different international problems appeared. There were new enemies, confrontations and aggressions. Maps were redrawn. Countries appeared and countries disappeared. Nations were reunited and nations were divided. The Iron Curtain and the Bamboo Curtain were common household words. The cold war had begun in earnest.

Internally, the United States was changing, as well. America was a world power on the move. By 1946 new communities were being created in many parts of the United States. The post World War II "baby boom" began.

Southern California was changing as well. The area's aircraft plants, military bases and oil fields were being expanded. The population of the Golden State was growing by thousands each month. Cold-weary Easterners and Midwesterners eager for a better life were packing their household possessions and moving their families West. They wanted a chance to bask in the sun and fortunes of Southern California. They left behind crime, decaying neighborhoods, polluted cities, and lower wages.

Economic conditions showed that Southern California was ripe for plant-

ing and harvest. The Golden State was eager for new residents and workers.

The second California Gold Rush was on!

Whittier was feeling the changes as well. The sleepy, Quaker-settled, white community was expanding. Hundreds of new homes, places of employment and thousands of new residents called for changes in the city. More schools needed to be constructed, as well as more shopping areas, and more churches. Whittier was a church-going, God-fearing city. The Protestant ethic helped build the city. Whittier College, established by the Quakers, was the heart of the community.

As in the cases with other mainline Protestant denominations, the Lutheran Churches were especially aware of the fledgling mission needs in Southern California. There were not enough congregations established to minister to the Lutherans who now inhabited the region. Thousands of Lutheran families had moved to California and to Washington in the 1940s. On the West Coast small towns had become cities almost overnight. This made a great problem for the department of church work known as "home missions." New missions cost money, but as many as possible needed to be established so that Lutherans from "back home" did not drift from the church, never to return. The Church needed to be planted on the West Coast as it had been planted on the nation's Eastern seaboard and on the vast Midwest farmlands many decades earlier. A harvest of souls, many of them recently established in new homes and businesses, was there to evangelize with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many were there just waiting for a Lutheran church, similar to those back home, to be built close to their new residences.

A new field of Christian ministry was officially organized following an Ash Wednesday Service on March 6, 1946. Salem United Lutheran Church, Whittier, California, was born in a rented upstairs hall above a dance studio near the corner of Whittier Boulevard and Hadley Street. The adults who were present that evening signed their respective names on the Charter Roll. Salem Lutheran Church began in an upper room in Whittier similar to the founding of the Christian Church in an Upper Room in Jerusalem over nineteen hundred years earlier.¹

How did this congregation come about? How did this parish with its beautiful buildings get established? What building was constructed first? Were there various building programs by the congregation over the years to help accommodate the congregation's ministry? Why do certain buildings have special names? These questions will be answered in this part of the story, the saga.

But first there must be a return to the beginning, the formation of this congregation. The congregation built a church. The church building helps prepare and focus on the work and workers of Christian ministry. But the congregation, the people, are the most important and vital part of a parish.

In 1944, the Reverend Dr. James P. Beasom, President of the California

¹ Salem Lutheran Church, Council Minutes, 6 March 1946.

Synod of the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA), requested church authorities to conduct a religious census in Whittier, California, a suburb of Los Angeles, to determine if a Lutheran congregation should be established.

From August, 1944 through August, 1945, the Board of American Missions (BAM) of the ULCA conducted a religious survey of the area of Los Angeles County known as West Whittier. This survey was compiled by the Division of Survey and Research of the Board of American Missions with its office in Chicago, Illinois.²

The survey described Whittier, California, as a city of 25,000 plus inhabitants. The section of the city that was covered by the report was newly developed since 1940 with a hundred plus homes being constructed. The price of these single-family homes was in the \$4,000 to \$6,000 price range. The homeowners were described as "wage earners," mostly American born, and the great majority were primarily English speaking.³

According to the survey, the West Whittier area contained no factories or manufacturing plants, but it did have a small business district. The area contained public grammar schools and a high school. There were no churches of any denomination in the area. Trinity Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, was the only Lutheran church in the whole city and it was located in the uptown

²"Initial Survey Report," ULCA, Board of American Missions, Chicago, 1944, 1.

³"Initial Survey," 1.

area.⁴

The survey stated that Whittier appeared to be a community that was God-fearing, church going, with no saloons, taverns, tap rooms, and no churches using games of chance to raise funds. There were also no Socialist Clubs, Communistic Reading Rooms or Centers, and no Christian Science groups in the immediate area. The officials permitted religious education (Released Time) to be taught in the grammar schools. There seemed to be no reason not to begin an ULCA congregation in West Whittier. The national church authorities approved the request of the survey team to begin a new mission in West Whittier in 1945.⁵

An article in the ULCA's national magazine, The Lutheran, describes this scene:

It is a sunny day in March, 1946. The small city of Whittier, California, is going to work as usual. Everything seems the same. But a miracle is about to take place. . . .

Who is that stranger parking his car at the curb?

The stranger is a pastor of the United Lutheran Church, sent there by the Board of American Missions. Probably he's looking for Lutherans. If so, no doubt he is lonesome. There's no United Lutheran Church here---there's not even a Lutheran Church within 10 miles.

But the stranger knows he isn't alone---two million Lutherans are backing him. So he keeps going through the town, although almost everybody he meets is indifferent. Probably they would

⁴ "Initial Survey," 1.

⁵ "Initial Survey," 2.

feel sorry for him if they knew what he was planning to do. But he has some good leads, and before the day is over he has found a little group of willing people to have Lutheran services in their community. Within weeks he has the nucleus of a congregation.

'I've found some lots in an orange grove,' he wrote to the board and to the California Synod's Division of Church Extension. 'It's quite a distance from the center of things now, but the community is moving in that direction and there will be many homes out there some day soon. If only I had \$5,500.'

Because loyal Lutherans had supported their church's program, the board had the means to act on the pastor's request. They investigated the situation in Whittier. They checked the property with real estate experts, authorities on population movement and local civic officials. With the congregation's committee they devised plans for constructing a chapel. Then the board not only bought the ground but through the California Synod advanced \$14,000 to help erect a building.

As the hammer blows resounded from the building of the chapel, they were echoed in hundreds of other construction projects in the city of Whittier. Houses were being built as rapidly as material and labor were available. The orange grove was leveled and in its place grew a whole new community. . . .

Then God performed a miracle as real as those of Bible times, a miracle that is being repeated in San Diego, Santa Ana and a dozen other California communities. It's a miracle that will continue to be repeated many times in the future throughout all of the U.S. and Canada, as the Board of American Missions continues its program for launching new congregations.

Today, after a little more than six years of existence, the mission chapel in the orange grove has become the church home for a membership of 430 confirmed Christians. . . .

But now as the pastor walks the streets, he's no longer a lonesome figure. His flock is large and the prospects of its future con-

tinued growth are excellent. No citizen feels sorry now for a Lutheran mission organizer---they point with pride to the thriving congregation as one of the city's great spiritual assets.

The future looks Good.

Salem Church in Whittier is only one concrete illustration of how the Church today has wonderful opportunities for growth and advancement through its mission program. It's a good investment for the church which brings huge returns---especially in the things of the spirit.

The community is turning to the church for spiritual help. . . . Its ministry reaches into many lives.⁶

A Pastor Arrives

The Reverend and Mrs. Paul J. Gerberding were sent by BAM in early June 1945, to Whittier, California. Canvassing work began very rapidly. The work of establishing a congregation in West Whittier was under way.⁷

Pastor Gerberding conducted the first Service in the upstairs rented hall on September 9, 1945. Synod President Beasom preached to the ninety people in the congregation. Many of these were guests from neighboring parishes.

The following Sunday the first regular Service and Sunday School were held. There were twenty-four worshipers at the Service and twenty students in

⁶ Paul W. Travis. "Miracle in California," The Lutheran, 4 March 1953, 16-19.

⁷ The Rev. Arthur Knudsen, letter to Dr. Beasom, 15 June 1945.

Sunday School.⁸

The first permanent council members were elected at the organization meeting on March 6, 1946. The Charter Roll of names was kept open for the other adult members' signatures until Easter, 1946. The nine council men and the pastor met regularly with BAM officials and as a committee on their own. The main topics of discussion were the need to locate land and how to construct the needed building now that the congregation was formed.⁹

In June, 1946, a site for the church building was purchased on Glengarry Avenue at a cost of \$5,500. This was made possible by a loan for that amount from the mission board. The lot measured .74 of an acre. It was a small portion of a thirty-acre orange grove. Eventually three more small pieces of land would be acquired making the one acre present site.¹⁰

At special Congregational Meetings that were called in late October the congregation approved architect, John Flemming, and his "Glendale Church Plans" as the blueprints for the first church unit. (These plans were previously used by another denomination for their facility in Glendale.) Building permits from Los Angeles County were instructed to be obtained as well, and the council was further ordered to seek another loan from BAM for the construction of

⁸ The Rev. David Robison, second pastor of Salem Church, interview with author, June 1993.

⁹ Council Minutes, 8 Oct.1945.

¹⁰ Annual Report, Pastor Robison, 14 Jan.1947.

the building. Following these necessary actions, on October 31, 1946, Pastor Gerberding and his wife, Daisy, moved to Pomona, California, to establish Trinity Lutheran Church.¹¹

On to Pomona

Pastor Gerberding had founded another parish for the Glory of God. Salem Church was formally organized. The congregation was growing. Sunday School was growing. The lay people were assuming leadership roles and the initial stage of developing a parish was finished. The parish called another pastor to lead the flock in the next chapter of the story. Pastor Gerberding went on to another territory and started all over again the difficult and tedious process of canvassing and ringing door bells for the possibility of yet another parish to begin.¹²

Robison Takes Charge

The Reverend David E. Robison, his wife, Doris, and Jim and Ruth (their children) drove across country to Whittier from Great Bend, Kansas. He was sent by the ULCA Board of American Missions for there were not enough pastors in California to meet the growing needs of the fledgling congregations. The young family arrived at the new assignment on October 30, 1946. The first twenty-four hours were spent staying with church members until the parsonage

¹¹ Council Minutes, 27 Oct. 1946.

¹² David Robison, interview.

was vacated.

Upon Pastor Robison's arrival, there was an urgent need to locate a substitute facility for worship. The congregation was "homeless." The building they were occupying was suddenly rented to another party for a much larger fee and on a lease. A new location had to be found immediately.¹³

This new facility was at 128 S. Greenleaf Avenue, in the uptown area. The second and final temporary parish location was in another second floor hall. This hall was above the K. D. Miller Electric Shop. The congregation met there for most of its programs until the sanctuary was built on Glengarry Avenue.¹⁴

With the visitations not only by both pastors, but also with the active assistance of the council men, and other laity, the congregation was rapidly growing. By 1947 there were 105 baptized members, 73 confirmed members; 42 youth were enrolled in the Sunday School, and confirmation classes were being conducted. Not only the Women's Missionary Society was regularly meeting, but a Salem Men's Group was formed. Choir rehearsals were being held in various homes. The congregation had a pressing need for a permanent, larger church building. Salem used various church halls for special congregational dinners, programs and meetings. St. Matthias Episcopal Church fa-

¹³The Rev. David Robison, letter to Dr. Arthur Knudsen, 1 Nov. 1946.

¹⁴David Robison, interview.

cilities were often used, the pastors of both parishes were close friends, having arrived in the city at about the same time.¹⁵

It was difficult and inconvenient for the parishioners to rely on rented quarters, whether in another church or elsewhere. The parish kept a full worship and educational program going as smoothly as possible in rented or borrowed facilities, while planning for its own facilities for Sunday Services, Sunday School, Lenten Services, women's and men's meetings, new member classes, confirmation classes, counseling occasions, and an official church office.¹⁶

Pastor Robison printed this message marking the first anniversary of the organization of the congregation in the March 5, 1947, Bulletin.

Any anniversary is an occasion for remembering and it must be a joy to all charter members of this church to look back to the Service on March 6th of 1946 when they had part in this good work. As the years pass that memory will grow more and more precious and the satisfaction will be shared by all who have joined and given loyal support to this venture of faith.

Remembered with affection and esteem are Pastor and Mrs. Paul Gerberding who began the work here and called the initial Service which was held on September 9, 1945. Great appreciation is due the Synod of California and the Board of American Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America. Planting the Church calls for farsightedness and devotion to the will of the Master.

¹⁵ Annual Congregational Minutes, 19 Jan. 1947.

¹⁶ Salem Lutheran Church, Service Bulletin, 5 March 1947.

The whole Church is interested in Salem Lutheran for its benevolence giving has helped to establish this church. And by the same spirit Salem is interested in the whole church and will fulfill its Christian obligations gladly. We are conscious that the Church is the Body of Christ and that we are members thereof.¹⁷

Despite its infancy and its pressing need for its own facilities, Salem Church did not keep all of its offerings at home. The parish accepted the United Lutheran Church in America's apportionment of five dollars per confirmed member for the work of the whole Church for the year, and Salem also accepted the Synod of California's appeal to raise an average of four dollars per confirmed member annually for the support of the newly founded Home for the Aged in Alhambra, California.¹⁸ Non-perishable food was also collected for this home. Members of the congregation gave their time, labor, and special offerings for the development of its facilities. Another long time association of Christian concern and cooperation developed at the same time with the Navajo Indians of Northern Arizona.¹⁹

Just as it was important for all of the newly arrived residents to have a family home, it was equally important for the congregational family to have their own permanent home.

After a successful building fund campaign conducted by the council the

¹⁷ Service Bulletin, 27 March 1947.

¹⁸ Service Bulletin, 27 March 1947.

¹⁹ Service Bulletin, 7 Dec. 1947.

parish was ready to build at the Glengarry lot. World War II gave the members of the congregation the feeling that they could not fail in constructing their first edifice. On the sixth anniversary of the Pearl Harbor Attack, December 7, 1947, the Service of Ground-Breaking for the construction of the first unit--a small Spanish style sanctuary--took place. The congregation celebrated this important step with much happiness.²⁰

On Sunday, February 29, 1948, the Cornerstone Laying Service took place. To give added importance to this celebration of growth and commitment the Mayor of Whittier, John Kemmerer, and Synod President Beasom, Pastor Gerberding from Pomona, and Pastor Robison were involved in the blessing ceremony. The event was followed by a reception for all in honor of the Gerberdings at the parsonage on McNees Avenue.²¹

Pastor Robison said the following blessing on this day. It described the purpose of the new building in the mission of this parish church.

In the faith of Jesus Christ, I do now lay this cornerstone. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; that here true faith, the fear of God and brotherly love may abide; and that this place may be set apart to the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the Holy Sacraments, and the invocation and praise of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen. Amen. Amen.²²

²⁰ Salem Fund Raising Booklet, 1955.

²¹ Service Bulletin, 29 Feb. 1948.

²² Service Bulletin, 29 Feb. 1948.

The congregation truly put their support in the construction of this building. It was the subject of much conversation, labor and speculation. Many thousands of dollars in construction costs were saved by the men, women and some youth doing much of the construction projects. Work parties were held several times in the four and one-half months of construction time. This knit the congregation, various committees and all council members together. Women cooked and baked for various dinners or lunches during the construction periods. Work for the various parts of the building was not only at the building site, but in the garages of the parsonage and various member homes. The synod contractor, the Reverend Edward Spierer, even taught Pastor Robison and others to design and make leaded windows for the sanctuary. (They remain a part of the current Parish Hall.) The church furniture was made at the home of Les Thompson in Brea. Ken Atkinson constructed all the wooden cabinets. The church women sewed all of the paraments for the altar, pulpit, and lectern in the liturgical colors. They designed and sewed the dossal curtain above the altar as well. The pastor made his own stoles.²³

This was a tremendous opportunity for pastor, council and congregation to work together on a specific, meaningful goal, the construction of a home for the parish activities. It brought a sense of family, belonging, service and Christian witness. It was a gathering. It was shared labor in the vineyard for the Lord. It was shared creativity and the shared use of each one's particular

²³ David Robison, interview.

strengths and expertise for the Glory of God.

Salem Congregation Has a Home

Salem's first unit, its first permanent building on the church site was dedicated in a festive, overflowing setting on Sunday, May 16, 1948. The joyful congregation and friends of the parish assembled at 3:00 p.m. The Synod President Beasom, Dr. Spierer, Pastor Gerberding, Pastor Schwertz from the Los Angeles Conference, and Pastor Robison all took part. They joined the council members and choir in the procession into the new sanctuary. The President of the California Synod said, "I do now set apart this Salem United Evangelical Lutheran Church as a House of God; and dedicate it to the glory and honor of Almighty God, and to the service of his holy Church. . . ."²⁴

Part of the furnishings for the new sanctuary were given by families and individuals as memorials to loved ones. This, too, was a powerful demonstration and witness to the roots of the congregation. This building is here because of the faithfulness of those who told the story, and shared the Gospel with their children and grandchildren, co-workers, neighbors and strangers. They passed on the faith. Salem inherited a legacy. Salem's job then was to pass on this legacy and to make it vital, important, and serving to the neighboring community, nation and world. Other parishes in neighboring areas also gave money or gifts. These ecumenical expressions of love included gifts from Whittier Presbyterian Church; Trinity Lutheran Church, Pasadena; and

²⁴ Service Bulletin, 16 May 1948.

Hollywood Lutheran Church.²⁵

Salem's confirmation class participated in the rite of confirmation in the month-old building in June, 1948. They were excited to be the first class and to be confirmed in a brand new building as well. The Advent and Christmas Services were much more comfortable and elaborate with the luxury of the parish's own church home in which to celebrate God's love and to serve the community. The parish's first Candlelight Christmas Eve Service took place that year with its special emphasis on choral and congregational singing.²⁶

The parish statistics show much growth once the building was dedicated and in use. Forty-five new adult members were added to the membership list in 1948. The baptized membership of the congregation was now 196. The average attendance at Services was 111, double what it had been the year before. The Sunday School membership was 137 with an average Sunday attendance of 99.²⁷

Still Not Enough Room

The Salem Sunday School was growing very rapidly. More and more young families were moving into the neighborhood. Space was limited. Besides Sunday School needs, the parishioners wanted to add a large, multi-

²⁵ Service Bulletin, 16 May 1948.

²⁶ Ruth Ali Hassan, interview with author, June 1993. Ali Hassan is the daughter of Pastor David Robison.

²⁷ "Pastor's Report for 1948," [David Robison], Jan. 1949.

purpose room off of the new sanctuary. A church member, Waldo Wadley, was an architect. He designed a large general purpose room to be attached to the sanctuary. This first parish hall was built in a few months with the generous help of many volunteer members in the parish family. The cost was about \$2,500. Within a year and a half after the sanctuary was dedicated, this new wing was also dedicated. The Dedication Service for the new Parish Hall and Sunday School addition was held after a congregational supper on October 29, 1949. Pastor Robison dedicated this building for "the cultivating of happy Christian fellowship among the people of this communion and community, as we come together to break bread and enjoy the companionship of one another."²⁸

The larger facilities allowed the congregation to offer still more Services, Christian education programs, youth activities, and a Boy Scout troop. A second Service was added to the worship program in 1951. Easter and Holy Week included still more worship opportunities for the whole community.²⁹

In September, 1951, the Salem Sunday School was divided into two sessions because of the large increase in attendance. The average Sunday School attendance that year was 216. The Sunday School enrollment was 335 students with a staff of 32. The First Session of Sunday School for all ages was

²⁸ David Robison, interview.

²⁹ Council Minutes, 3 Dec. 1951.

held at 9:45 a.m. with the Second Service (up to grade 3) held simultaneously with the Service at 11:00 a.m. This was begun to help eliminate the crowded conditions at the Service.³⁰

Even with these new, modern facilities, Salem's Sunday School departments were being taxed. A new Sunday School building was needed to accommodate all the enrolled students. Building plans were studied and discussed. A new building, however, meant that more land had to be acquired to enlarge the church parking lot. The congregation then obtained another section of land, 55 feet by 123 feet, for \$2,500.³¹

Gerberding Hall

After a fund raising goal of \$26,000 was achieved which allowed for the retirement of all building debts to that time, the ground was broken on December 16, 1951, for the 2,000 square foot Sunday School building. The building would contain Sunday School classrooms, ample cabinets, and two rest rooms. It also was designed by Waldo Wadley, church member, and architect. Theo Haberland was in charge of the Building Committee. The total cost of the unit was \$10,000, not including the donated materials and countless hours of donated labor.³²

³⁰ Service Bulletin, 16 Sept. 1951.

³¹ Council Minutes, 3 August 1951.

³² Service Bulletin, 16 Dec. 1951.

The new Sunday School Building was dedicated on Sunday May 4, 1952. The congregation and Sunday School students were present for the 9:45 a.m. Service. Greetings were given by the Superintendent of the Sunday School, Mr. Roland Holdeman, and Mr. James Bruce, chairman of the funding campaign.³³

Mrs. Daisy Gerberding, widow of Pastor Gerberding, visited Salem Church shortly after her husband's passing. She was the guest of honor for the unveiling of a brass plaque that was placed on the outside wall of the new Sunday School building. This plaque honored the founding pastor of Salem, 1945-1946, the Reverend Paul J. Gerberding. From that day on, this building has been referred to as Gerberding Hall.³⁴

Gerberding Hall has given large service not only to the Sunday School, but also to Vacation Bible School, Luther Leagues for the youth, the Exceptional Children's Foundation, and the Released Time education programs.³⁵ The Exceptional Children's Foundation (an educational program for physically challenged children) used Gerberding Hall throughout their school year. The Released Time program brought about 400 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders to the building each Friday from nearby public schools. Salem Church

³³ Service Bulletin, 4 May 1952.

³⁴ Service Bulletin, 11 Oct. 1952.

³⁵ Service Bulletin, 4 May 1952.

was serving about 1,300 people in various ministries each week. The facilities needed to be enlarged.³⁶

In 1954, the congregation's rolls gained 74 adult members, after adjustments, bringing the confirmed members of the parish to 557.³⁷

A fund raising campaign began in 1955 to raise adequate funds for a larger sanctuary, more office space, and additional Sunday School rooms.

During this same year, Salem Church was asked to help support the construction of the much needed Presbyterian Inter-Community Hospital of Whittier and also to help finance the purchase of a new site for the synod's Camp Yoliwa.³⁸

The mission and direction of Salem Church was summarized on a page in the 1955 Membership Directory:

Each succeeding directory reminds us that Salem continues to grow and grow. Surely this should be the case if we are up and about Master's business. God has set us in the midst of an abundant harvest field and the souls we win for His Church are all about us.

Whose church is Salem? It is yours and it is Christ's. You are a part of a blessed partnership which is engaged in doing the work of the Lord here and afar. We pray for your constant and continuing cooperation in the great mission which we have to perform.

³⁶ David Robison, interview.

³⁷ "Pastor's Report for 1954," [David Robison], 21 Jan. 1955.

³⁸ Service Bulletin, 17 July 1955.

Many are giving and serving generously in Christian service. They are at the heart of the Church and the Church is in their hearts. God is blessing them and the Church through them. Surely he lays it upon the heart of every member who had stood before His altar and given his or her promise as a member of the Church to "be faithful to its teachings and diligent in the use of the means of grace."

If any of us whose names appear upon the roll of the membership of Salem have been less loyal than we should be as members of the "Body of Christ", may the months that follow find us entering with more warmth into the fellowship of the Gospel and more earnest in our devotion to Him whose Kingdom we seek now and forever.

Salem's people have come from all points of the compass and from thousands of miles in every direction. But together we have one destination toward which we all hasten. Let us go forward as a congregation of true believers in cheerful consecration, having genuine love and offering sincere prayers for one another in our household of faith and for the Church at large. . . .³⁹

Despite zoning problems with the County of Los Angeles over adequate parking spaces and the objections of a few neighbors over traffic congestion in neighborhood, the congregation was determined to expand its facilities. The members and friends of the neighborhood parish wrote many letters and attended several county meetings in order to obtain legal permission to build. The County Board passed authorization in 1957 to allow the congregation to build its desired new facility.⁴⁰

³⁹Salem Lutheran Church, Membership Directory, 1955.

⁴⁰ Service Bulletin, 7 April 1957.

The organization of two new congregations of the National Lutheran Council in South Whittier (St. Andrew), and in East Whittier (Shepherd of the Hills), and another new congregation in neighboring La Mirada (Prince of Peace), began to have an effect on the West Whittier parish. With the organizations of these congregations on the same field, there was a more clearly defined area of intense parish responsibility.⁴¹

Salem's high point of church membership and attendance was in the late 1950's. On Easter Sunday, 1957, for example, there were four Services with a total attendance of 860.⁴²

In 1959, the parish was granted a \$100,000 loan to construct a new building. The Rev. Dr. Edward Spirer was hired as contractor for the new building.⁴³

Ground breaking for the new unit was held on October 11, 1959, with the Rev. Dr. Edward Spirer as the guest preacher. A twenty-four hour prayer vigil was held in the sanctuary on Saturday, October 24, 1959, with the attention focused on "the unaltered and primary mission of the Church, the bringing of the Gospel to all people. . . . This solemn period in the quiet of the sanctuary is good for our souls and surely will rejoice our Lord who calls upon us to com-

⁴¹ "Pastor's Report for 1956," [David Robison], Jan. 1957.

⁴² Service Bulletin, 28 April 1957.

⁴³ Service Bulletin, 10 May 1959.

mune with Him.”⁴⁴

The cornerstone was dedicated on February 14, 1960, at an afternoon Service. The black polished granite stone was inscribed with these words: “Built Upon Jesus Christ, Himself the True Cornerstone.” The cornerstone box contained important and timely documents and a Bible printed exactly 100 years before.⁴⁵

The prayer for dedication of this new cornerstone was the same used for the dedication of the first sanctuary of the parish.⁴⁶

Many of the church bulletins and the monthly newsletters contained articles concerning the construction of the building and the need for volunteer labor to help cut building costs. It is estimated that over 9,000 hours of volunteer construction labor came from the men, women, and youth of the congregation for the building of this larger addition. These volunteer laborers were directed by Mr. Hollis Keesling. Mrs. Helen Spindel headed the committee to prepare and serve approximately 1,250 meals to the volunteers. The net result of these combined efforts, with the assistance of volunteers on various projects of

⁴⁴ Service Bulletin, 18 Oct. 1959.

⁴⁵ Service Bulletin, 14 Feb. 1960.

⁴⁶ Service Bulletin, 14 Feb. 1960.

the building, was a savings of nearly \$40,000.⁴⁷

The congregation, too, gave generously for the new Service books, paraments, choir robes, stained glass windows and other furnishings to beautify the sanctuary. New pews were paid for by the elimination of other building costs because of volunteer labor. The old pews were given to Salem's sister church, Shepherd of the Hills, in East Whittier.⁴⁸

The congregation could not wait until dedication to use the sanctuary. This was because the old sanctuary was being converted into a parish hall. The first Service in the new building was held on Christmas Eve, 1960.⁴⁹ On January 22, 1961, Salem Lutheran Church was the host for a televised Service over KTTV, Channel 11, of Great Churches of the Golden West. Salem's broadcast was the 483rd such telecast of that Southern California program. The sanctuary was filled to capacity. Over 300,000 viewers watched the Service.⁵⁰

Second Sanctuary Dedicated

The long awaited Dedication was on April 16, 1961. Another prayer vigil of

⁴⁷ Jim Dwyer and George Spindel, interview with author, July 1993. Dwyer and Spindel are long-time members of the parish.

⁴⁸ Service Bulletin, 23 Oct. 1960.

⁴⁹ David Robison, interview.

⁵⁰ Service Bulletin, 22 Jan. 1961.

thanksgiving took place the night before. The Rev. Dr. Carl V. Tambert, President of the California Synod, and Pastor Robison led the dedication. Salem's four choirs also led in the procession. Immediately after the Service, a reception and open house were held for the whole community to view the new facilities throughout the afternoon.⁵¹

The Dedication Booklet included an informative synopsis of the furnishings and purpose of the sanctuary.

Our sanctuary is a very special place, set aside for the exclusive purpose of worshiping God. Its design is such that nearly every feature and detail call our attention to some aspect or person of God.

As we enter the sanctuary our attention is immediately focused on the chancel, particularly the altar and cross occupying the central place in the chancel. The altar reminds us of our sinfulness and need for forgiveness and also God's mercy in providing a means for our salvation. The cross of course reminds us of Christ's death. . . . High above the altar on the face of the canopy is a descending dove symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Our beautiful stained glass windows each preach an eloquent sermon of an important event in the life of Christ. . . .

All of these beautiful features have been provided in our sanctuary to glorify God and to help create a feeling of reverence and of God's Presence. Proper surroundings can aid us in the worship of God and make our worship Services more inspiring and meaningful so that we may in turn be better Christians, more willing to serve Him according to His will. On the other hand, no amount of beauty and symbolism of itself will bring about a right relationship with God. But when we prayerfully seek to worship God, beautiful surroundings can make our worship more meaning-

⁵¹ Service Bulletin, 16 April 1961.

ful. We pray this may ever be so at Salem.⁵²

No other buildings have been constructed on the church site since the present sanctuary was constructed. The facilities have been adequate for the use of the congregation and neighborhood. The building was completely debt free as of Sunday, December 19, 1971, the day on which the congregation celebrated with a Debt Retirement Service. This marked the conclusion of the 25th anniversary year of the founding of the parish. It certainly was a milestone in the history of the congregation. Pastor Lee B. Rozen had been the Assistant Pastor for just one month.

Since that day, the various church buildings have been lovingly maintained by the congregation. Repairs and renovations have included paint parties, parking lot resurfacing and repainting, water and gas line repairs, earthquake repairs, and a large sanctuary renovation, especially in the nave and chancel areas in recent years, with new carpeting, altar modifications, and a new sound system under the leadership of the Salem Council, Property Committees and Pastor Rozen.

Upon the recommendation at a Salem Council meeting by Pastor Rozen, the parish hall, scene of the first church sanctuary, was named Robison Hall. This was in recognition of Pastor Robison's retirement. In a special ceremony, a special brass plaque was placed on a wall with his picture above it, honoring the many years of his faithful ministry to the parish.

⁵² Salem Lutheran Church, "Dedication Booklet," 1961.

Salem Church is a beautiful plant. The buildings are kept clean and repaired as much as possible to serve the parish's worship, educational, social ministry and evangelistic needs and programs.

Analysis

During World War II American families, homes, stability and the status quo were interrupted. But the war brought victory to the United States and its allies. It can be said that war created many parishes throughout California. The West Whittier area was no exception. The military returned home looking for stability. They hoped to establish families and homes. The soldiers were glorified as heroes.

It was easy to get loans. It was simple to dream vast plans because in a sense this war created no failures. Nothing could prevent realization of new families, new communities and among them new parishes.

Americans were thankful to God because we were on the side of good and victory. People were further anxious to dedicate their lives to God. War became a boon. These new families created new houses, neighborhoods and problems.

The church existed to focus the interest and attention of these families, not only on God and His allowing them to be victorious, but on serving humanity. It is ironical that Salem Church is constructed as if it were another home on the block.

Geographically, Whittier became more of a blue collar community. It was

easy to buy a new car with little or no collateral: if you had a job, you could purchase a home. Whittier needed to focus its religious components, a physical plant where you could marry, baptize, confirm and bury the dead as needed.

West Whittier needed a focal center for their social activities as well. So the church became more than a building. This place of permanence fulfilled post-war trauma, became a way to say thank you to God for victory and peace and provided a home for the weary and for those who lost family members in the war.

Historically the Lutheran Church had its doors open to all people. Whittier was no exception. However, Lutherans were the nucleus of people who established this parish and had their roots in traditional Lutheranism from other parts of the United States. This congregation was not established so much by converts, but by gathering existing Lutherans into a worshipping body. It is traditionally Lutheran to build congregations from already established Lutheran background families.

Once again it must be pointed out that this Lutheran parish was born out of a broader historical reference, namely that the roots of Lutheranism were already here. These newly established families had brought to Whittier from other parts of the country their Lutheran faith. They needed a building in order to incorporate their traditions into a place of permanence. They were ready to organize. The Board of American Missions (BAM) surveyed the West Whittier area

and determined that there were enough interested and dedicated people to establish a congregation to meet their needs. This surveying is also very typical of the process of forming Lutheran congregations. In a sense there was no gamble. The people were there. They were ready for the church and they were unwilling to become involved in the Missouri Synod Lutheran parish across town.

This presents an interesting question. Why were the people unwilling to join the more conservative Lutheran denomination? Was it because of the ULCA's determination to create an alternative parish? Did they force the issue in their zeal? Was it because of the blue collar hesitancy to join a more pietistic and legalistic form of Lutheranism? Perhaps we could say it was a bit of all of these reasons. Since the original survey does not address these questions nor do the charter members remember the exact reasons, it is assumed they, the charter members, wanted something different.

They needed and wanted to form a more familiar and comfortable church. Thus, Salem Lutheran (Congregation of "Peace") was organized. This parish was born as an echo of war to serve as an instrument of peace: thus its appropriate name, Salem.

In the aftermath of war strong ethnic feelings existed in the nation about Germans and Japanese. Whittier, being on the West Coast, would probably have had negative feelings about Japanese more than Germans. Also to be considered is the fact that few Japanese lived in Whittier and traditionally there

are few Japanese Lutherans. Thus Salem Lutheran did not have to create programs to assist the congregation in dealing with those kinds of feelings. There is no evidence that programs were created in the early history to address bias and prejudice. Lutheranism came out of Germany therefore the German groups posed no visible threats.

There is more to the building than just the building. This building was the stepping stone to much more innovative and creative times.

When the congregation was originally formed, they were in a sense, "homeless," having no building of their own. It was very important for the parishioners to construct a church home. The buildings not only provided a place for public worship, education, fellowship and other types of ministry, but were a sign to the neighborhood and the community that the faithful were here. The article about the "Miracle in California" explained Salem's purpose well, although some details have changed dramatically.

Presently there is no new construction in the immediate area of the parish. There are several other churches of different denominations in the adjacent neighborhoods. However, unlike most other churches in Whittier, this church is located in the center of a neighborhood on a residential street. It is not even located on a corner! It is not a glorious, imposing monument. It was not meant to be. It is a parish church. This is significant because it visibly symbolizes to the community in which it stands that it, too, is another home, a place of solace and peace.

The buildings have met the needs of the congregation and the community. These buildings have been created as a result of fulfilling the programs of the congregation. Ministry is conducted in them and even more importantly, from them.

Today, the city hall would not allow a church to be built in such a residential area. Perhaps, too, the people in general would not permit such a building because of the diversities of their racial and religious backgrounds.

Because the church grew up in the neighborhood the people accepted it as being part of their lives, too. As an example, we have installed a church bell within the past decade and ringing it for every service has not produced a single complaint from the community.

Perhaps the surrounding homes are unaware of what Lutheranism is. It may well be that the Lutherans, themselves, are denominationally ignorant. This may indicate that the idea of "church" is changing. People may generalize that church is a bell, a place to pray and worship, and a place to marry and be buried from, and yet have no idea what theologically is contained therein.

Traditionally, Lutheranism (and Salem Lutheran being no exception) has been concerned about educating its members. From church records, this building gave greater impetus to educational programming even in its early years.

Lives have changed, and because the Christian message extols the follower of Christ to not put emphasis on brick and mortar--such as the temple in

Jerusalem which was to be destroyed-- the building itself was not to be worshiped. Christians were to worship God in spirit and truth and not to contain Christ in a building made by human hands.

CHAPTER 3

Leadership Styles of the Pastors

The concept of the ordained ministry has changed and expanded since Salem was founded. Salem has had only three pastors during her forty-eight year history. (The parish has had two Assistant Pastors--Richard Spaulding, now a school teacher living in Claremont, California; and Lee Rozen, who was elected to be Salem's current pastor. Two non-ordained seminarians, John Wetzel and Bob Mizerak, served separately as one-year interns at Salem. Only John Wetzel went on to be ordained into the holy ministry.)¹

The three pastors of Salem were all ordained in the same Church, or its consecutive denomination, of a merged Lutheran Church. All three men were educated and trained in Lutheran seminaries for ministry in a parish setting in the United States. But the three pastors and their pastorates, although working within the same congregation, were different. Emphasis and style of leadership were not the same among them. Ages, secular work experience, backgrounds, marital status, traditions and steps up to the pastorate of Salem were often different. Different times presented different needs, challenges and responses. Each pastor was a product, a son, of his own time; with his own brand of Lutheranism, his own profession of faith, and his own calling by God to the ordained ministry of the Gospel.

¹ David Robison, interview.

Paul J. Gerberding---Missionary and Founder

Paul J. Gerberding was born near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on June 2, 1873. He attended Lima College and was graduated from Chicago Theological Seminary. Pastor Gerberding was ordained in 1903. His first call was to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Chicago, Illinois. He served there twelve years. Pastor Gerberding then served three other parishes in Indiana, Iowa, and Illinois.

In 1927 he became a field missionary for the United Lutheran Church in America, organizing 22 mission congregations in seven states.

He died on March 8, 1952, at 78 years of age. He was buried in Chicago, Illinois. He was survived by his wife, Daisy, three children, and numerous other family members. Many of the family have been active in Lutheran Church work.²

Paul J. Gerberding was the founding pastor of Salem parish. He was 72 years of age when he served in Whittier. He served at Salem from early June, 1945, to October 31, 1945. This was approximately one and one-half years. This is not a long time for a pastorate, especially a pastorate at Salem.

Despite this brief pastorate, this elderly man of physically small stature is held in high regard by those who remember him. He was a man who spoke his mind and had firm convictions. He expected his people to listen and to follow his recommendations. Pastor Gerberding was a "go getter." He was a leader. He had to be. Many of the people of the developing congregations had little

² "Gerberding, Rev. Paul J," The Lutheran, 23 April 1952, 44-46.

experience in the leadership areas of the congregation. They needed Pastor Gerberding's leadership, input, and experience in conducting the everyday affairs of a fledgling congregation. Pastor Gerberding used his office and power to accomplish the necessary steps in the formal organization and initial building program of Salem Parish. His leadership was effective in obtaining these primary goals in mission establishment.

Pastor Gerberding's strong leadership and aggressive campaign manner helped him excel in the formation of missions. The statistics prove this. He served from one end of the nation to another, coast to coast. Pastor Gerberding literally "planted the church," much like the American Lutheran patriarch, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg.

As soon as he arrived in Whittier with his wife, Daisy, to establish the West Whittier Lutheran Mission, he began a vigorous calling campaign. Friendly, neighborly house calls were made north and south of Whittier Boulevard and even into surrounding communities. He believed that the best way to establish a congregation was to frequent the neighborhood and literally personally invite each one to come to the new mission church.³

Pastor Gerberding was the President of the Salem Church Council and he often spoke with sole authority in congregational actions, especially concerning the securing of a worship location and the procuring of the church property site. This authority was granted him by the fledgling congregation.⁴

³ David Robison, interview.

⁴ Council Minutes, 4 March 1946.

The Reverend Gerberding was a catalyst and he was responsible for several milestone events in his one and one-half year Salem pastorate. He presided over the official organization of Salem United Lutheran Church, Whittier, California, on March 6, 1946.⁵

Pastor Gerberding worked closely with President Beasom of the California Synod of the ULCA and other officials in organizing and developing the parish. With his perseverance, an architect for the first sanctuary was secured and blue print plans were approved by the congregation.⁶

During this short period, Pastor Gerberding organized the Salem Council and its officers. He secured loans for the parsonage on McNeese Street, the property site, and applied for another BAM loan for the first sanctuary building. Pastor Gerberding worked diligently and attacked the problems---temporary church housing, a home for the pastor, a church lot, building plans, and the money to finance all of these endeavors in a serious, business-like manner. He had much experience in these tasks as a successful field missionary. After all of these necessities were accomplished he moved to Pomona, California where he organized Trinity Lutheran Church. Following that assignment there were still other missions ahead.⁷

Salem's educational building, constructed in 1952, honors this first pastor. The Sunday School building is named Gerberding Hall in recognition of

⁵ Council Minutes, 6 March 1946.

⁶ Council Minutes, 20 Oct. 1946.

⁷ Council Minutes, Oct. 27, 1946.

this missionary and founder of Salem Lutheran Church.⁸

David E. Robison---Builder and Chaplain

David E. Robison was born on October 12, 1911, in Berwick, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Gettysburg College and Gettysburg Theological Seminary (ULCA), Pennsylvania. He was ordained in 1937 in the Gettysburg College Church. His first assignment was to Zion Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, Kansas, where he met and married his wife, Doris, who worked side by side with him. Pastor Robison also served in Illinois, Iowa, and in Europe. In Germany he served as a chaplain for the American Armed Forces.⁹

Following his return home to the United States after World War II, he was asked by the Board of American Missions (BAM) of the ULCA to serve a newly organized parish, Salem United Lutheran Church, Whittier, California.¹⁰

The Reverend Robison, his wife, Doris, and their two oldest children, Jim and Ruth, drove from Great Bend, Kansas, to Whittier, California, to begin work at Salem on November 1, 1946. Pastor Robison was a young man of 35 with a young family. Two more children were born to the Robisons in Whittier.

The very first challenge for Pastor Robison, whose call was to build up the congregation and its ministry, was the need to find another place for temporary worship for the congregation in four days! Salem was being evicted, without notice, from its first location. With the assistance of the Salem Council,

⁸ Council Minutes, Oct. 11, 1952.

⁹ David Robison, interview.

¹⁰ David Robison, interview.

the brand new pastor located other suitable worship facilities in time. This was, however, to be a foretaste of all the effort, concentration, and labor that would be used in constructing the parish facilities and property in the coming years.¹¹

Only after accepting the official call to be Salem's first permanent pastor upon his installation on February 29, 1948, did he relinquish the title of BAM missionary. President Beasom of the Synod of California installed him on that day. However, for all intents and purposes, Pastor Robison accepted the call to be the pastor of Salem Church, on October 12, 1947, almost one year after his arrival in Whittier.¹²

A glimpse of his expectations and style of leadership are able to be seen in this quote from The Tidings, the newsletter that he began to publish in 1947.

It is your pastor's earnest hope that everyone in the congregation will be present for the worship service on the 29th. . . which unites us as pastor and people. . . . If any should stay away from this service out of indifference, in some measure your pastor will feel like a bride who has proceeded to the altar only to discover that the groom has not appeared.¹³

At 3:30 p.m. on that same February day, the Cornerstone Laying for the new sanctuary, Salem's first building, took place.¹⁴

His ministry produced rapid growth---in buildings and members up to

¹¹ David Robison, interview.

¹² Service Bulletin, 29 Feb. 1948.

¹³ Salem Lutheran Church, The Tidings, May 1947.

¹⁴ Service Bulletin, 29 Feb. 1948.

the early 1960s. Then the construction of buildings ended and the parish membership rolls started significant decline. No more buildings were needed. The congregation had reached its peak---other churches, Lutheran and non-Lutheran, were now also serving the Whittier Community. Salem members were moving away and others were transferring to parishes closer to their homes.

The progression of buildings and the closeness of their construction dates give a good understanding of the work of the pastor and the congregation during these formative years. The first sanctuary addition was dedicated in 1948. The addition of a new multi-purpose room to the first unit occurred in 1949. A new parsonage for the growing pastor's family was built on the church property in 1950. The Sunday School addition, Gerberding Hall, was dedicated in 1952. Because the parking lot needed to be expanded for a larger sanctuary, the parsonage was moved down the street to Reichling Lane in 1955. In 1961 the present sanctuary, and the final building of Salem Church, was dedicated.¹⁵

These building programs were great challenges. There were many areas of stress in going through the various stages of progress for each property improvement program. Much physical, mental, and spiritual labor and anguish were connected to each stage of property improvement and expansion. Many people, congregational members and others, had ideas and concerns to be addressed. People, congregation, council and pastor, had to

¹⁵ "Dedication Booklet," 1961.

work together. The result was a combined effort and venture. Building programs involved architect's plans, building codes, county regulations, zoning problems, neighborhood relations and pledge drives to finance these growth requirements. It was a time of hard work, growing closer together, overcoming frustrations and celebrating each new improvement or addition. Pastor and congregation worked hand-in-hand and bonded together even more.

He led in the enthusiasm, planning, and implementation for each needed addition. Pastor Robison personally helped in the construction projects. He put aside his vestments for overalls and work shirts and often joined the volunteer work crews.

Pastor Robison said that "they really had to hustle" to keep up with all of the demands of this growing parish. Sunday School was booming and staff had to be found to properly conduct this ministry. Sunday Services were attended by many people. The high point was Easter in 1957, when 879 worshipers attended the four Services. There were many classes to be taught---new member, confirmation, and other subjects. Often this schedule did not allow adequate time for family involvement. This was especially unfortunate for the children. Dad was not home very much to help Doris with the rearing of the family. Often family gatherings and holidays had to be celebrated without Dad's presence or postponed for a more feasible time for the whole family. Pastor Robison became a workaholic.¹⁶

¹⁶David Robison, interview

Intern John Wetzel said to the Salem Council in 1959, "Pastor Robison should be given a day off each week. This is done in many churches." After discussing the situation, it was decided that "Pastor should have the opportunity to give this some thought and if no day has been selected by him by next Council Meeting, further action will be taken by the group at that time."¹⁷

It took until April for the situation to be resolved. "At the insistence of the Church Council, Thursday, every week, has been designated as Pastor's 'Day Off'. It will be appreciated if the congregation will observe this and refrain from making any plans involving Pastor's services on Thursdays."¹⁸

During his thirty-year ministry as pastor of Salem Church, Pastor Robison worked with many people. He came into contact with hundreds and hundreds. He baptized them, confirmed them, married them and buried them. One or two generations knew him as the pastor, their pastor. Close professional bonds developed among the congregation and Pastor Robison. He was called upon on many occasions to visit their ill, counsel them with their problems, and be a spiritual guide. These activities happened not only to the members of the congregation, but to those non-members as well. He excelled in these areas. He enjoyed these opportunities to witness and to serve God and his people. Pastor Robison is noted also for his care, humor, and strong paternal bonds that exist between him and several generations that make up the Salem family. He is much loved by his family and members of all the

¹⁷ Council Minutes, 5 Jan.1959.

¹⁸ Service Bulletin, 12 April 1959.

parishes he has served.

Pastor Robison did have some help from other professionals during part of those years. Richard Spaulding was Assistant Pastor from 1954 to 1956. Intern John Wetzel served for a year in 1959. Deaconess Sister Grace Boehling served as Parish Assistant for fifteen months beginning in 1963. Intern Bob Mizerak served for a year in 1968. But none of these was a long lasting ministry. This changed when Lee Rozen was called as the Assistant Pastor in 1971.¹⁹

Pastor Robison and Pastor Rozen served together for almost five years. Their roles were defined by the congregation as pastor and assistant pastor. Their respective ministries were conducted by each in that recommended manner. There was mutual assistance and support for each other. Relations were cordial between each other and among family members. If disagreements existed, they were minor. There was an age difference of over thirty-two years. On the job experience was different. Seminary training, techniques, preaching and liturgical styles were somewhat different. It was not a spiritual father-son relationship. It was more of a senior-junior partner relationship. This is what the congregation wanted and viewed. More frequent communication and the personal sharing of concerns would have perhaps strengthened the relationship even more.

Pastor Robison was soon approaching his sixty-fifth birthday, the usual age for retirement in the United States. Unknown to the congregation or to the

¹⁹ David Robison, interview.

staff he was experiencing health problems. His doctor urged him to take it easy. The following letter was sent to the Salem Council on September 13, 1976.

Dear Partners in the Gospel,

After deliberate and prayerful consideration of what this decision will mean in my life and yours, I do herewith, by this letter, respectfully submit to you my resignation as Pastor of Salem Lutheran Church.

My plans are to retire from a full time pastoral ministry and thereafter to serve our Lord in occasional ministries as he gives me opportunities, health and time so to do. Surely there is no such thing as a "retired Christian."

It is to be noted that in October I will become sixty-five years of age. I will have served by God's grace as an ordained minister for almost forty years, and will, at that time, complete thirty years as pastor here at Salem, having taken up the work in this parish at the end of October, 1946.

God has blessed us abundantly through these years. He has inspired us to love one another, to labor together in many endeavors, and to share the light of the Gospel of our Lord here and around the world. He has given us a host of dear memories and great promises. We pray simply that we all may continue to abide in his presence and in his peace forever and ever. May God continue to bless Salem's pastors and people through the years to come.

Thank you beyond measure for your patience, your prayers, your love and your loyalty. My family joins me in this expression of gratitude.

Always your friend in Christ, Pastor David Robison²⁰

Pastor Robison's final Annual Report to the congregation celebrated these facts:

²⁰ Council Minutes, 13 Sept. 1976.

During the years of my ministry 1,911 confirmed members were received (518) from classes of youth. I performed 1,005 baptisms, 455 weddings, and 1,069 funerals. There have been hundreds of others, even thousands, who have come into relationship with the ministry of this church over the years. The results have been truly far reaching.

I know our faithful Lord will abide with and guide always this church which is dear to Him. May Pastor Rozen and all the people of Salem continue to grow in grace and fulfill your mission as part of the Body of Christ. May God be with us all.²¹

Pastor Robison was a dedicated pastor. He was interested in the growth and development of Salem from very humble beginnings. He was a builder. He built all of the structures on the church property. He did this with the help of many in the congregation. He also was interested in matters pertaining to the Lutheran Church and the whole Christian Church outside of his own parish. He was synodically and ecumenically inclined. He served on many committees, boards, and governing bodies in these various areas. But next to being a builder, Pastor Robison was a chaplain. He was there in all sorts of crisis situations. He had the joy of seeing a generation or two grow up in the faith, in the same Salem family. Even with retirement, he did not stop his pastoral role. He served several parishes as interim pastor and remains on the staff of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Fullerton, California to the present.

Upon his retirement, the congregation presented to him the parsonage, bestowed on him the title Pastor Emeritus, and further honored him by designating the site of the first sanctuary, the present parish hall, as Robison

²¹ "Pastor's Report for 1976," [David Robison], Jan. 1977.

Hall. He with his devoted wife, Doris, two of their children, and several grandchildren, remain on the active roll of Salem Parish.

Lee B. Rozen---Celebrant and Connector

Lee B. Rozen was born on January 23, 1944, in Chicago, Illinois. He was graduated from California Lutheran College. He received his Master in Teaching Degree from LaVerne College, and then graduated from Pacific Lutheran Seminary, Berkeley, California, with a Master of Theology degree in 1971. He interned in the American Lutheran Church, Oslo, Norway. Pastor Rozen was ordained in 1971. He served as the Assistant/ Associate Pastor of Salem Church from November 15, 1971 until December 31, 1976. He was installed as Salem's Pastor (second permanent) on January 30, 1977, by Bishop Lloyd Burke.

Salem was Pastor Rozen's first parish, although he had served several others throughout his seminary years. His duties for the first years were mainly in the areas of Christian Education, including Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, and the Youth. (There were not many in the Youth group, despite, large numbers in confirmation classes and Sunday School sessions.) He was to assist in the Services, preach once a month, and do some hospital and home calling, as well. (These were standard call requirements for newly ordained Assistant Pastors in the 1970s.)

Pastor Rozen's Annual Report for 1971 was the foundation of work to come in the following years. The report was written only two months after his arrival in Whittier.

Studying and getting to know a congregation from just letters and reports is not very easy or realistic. The true picture of the parish---its achievements and joys, its lack of achievement and problems in certain areas, is much easier to understand by first hand observation and participation. I feel that I am "getting my feet wet" now. Salem Church has taken on a clearer image and personality for me now.

In 1972, I hope that we can form a Young Adults Group involving those in the 19-30 age bracket; married, single or divorced. There is a need here for Christian fellowship and concern. . . .

It is hoped that we can have more adult Bible studies. We are all so ignorant of God's Word and what it can mean in our lives. Opportunities have been planned to study this "Book of Life." Come out and join in them!. . . . It is hoped, too, that we can work on contemporary worship. . . .

The "numbers game" in the churches is over. We need to concentrate now on developing, using, and growing in faith, with those who are in our midst, and those within reach, right now. Doing Christ's will, not just hearing it, takes first precedence for all of us. . . . We need your prayers, suggestions, compliments, and criticism to work better to serve all those who desire here the Good News of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Thank you.²²

Most of these hopes were fulfilled in the succeeding years. The youth group was thriving, and a fine active Young Adults Group was doing many innovative projects. Pastor Rozen introduced a regular Contemporary Communion Service. At his urging there were more frequent celebrations of the Holy Communion, the Scandinavian Santa Lucia procession began, many trips to the Navajo Mission and the Grand Canyon areas were taken, a long with family retreats and youth retreats to Camp Yoliijwa and other areas. The

²² "Assistant Pastor's Annual Report," [Lee Rozen], 1971.

Thursday Morning Adult Bible Study continues to this day covering many diverse subjects and discussions. One of the highlights, though, was Pastor Rozen's chairmanship of the Salem Celebration of the Bicentennial . It was a glorious, fun event covering several days, with all ages of congregational members and non-members taking active roles in this religious and patriotic observance. Leading, planning, and working with the different groups in the congregation further strengthened a sense of trust, love, and respect among all concerned.

Pastor Robison's letter of resignation to the congregation that same year, 1976, was unexpected.

Pastor Rozen's situation and feelings need to be noted during this time. Pastor Rozen's father died on July 15, 1976, after a battle with cancer. Pastor Robison's letter of resignation took place less than two months after Casey Rozen's death. In those two short months Pastor Rozen had to help relocate his mother to an area closer to her older son, Gordon, in Huntington Beach, and help sell the family home and many possessions after twenty-four year's residence in Pomona. The last thing Pastor Rozen needed at that time was to have to resign from a position in which he was working very faithfully and creatively. Despite these feelings, because of Synod policy, he was required to resign and to clear the field completely for a new pastor, if so desired, by the congregation.

Pastor Rozen submitted his name to the congregation and Synod authorities to become the pastor of Salem. He was interviewed by the Salem

Council, along with three other older candidates, including Pastor John Wetzel, a former Salem intern. After reviewing the candidates and much discussion, two-thirds of the Salem Council voted to submit Pastor Lee Rozen's name for congregational approval. A Special Congregational Meeting was held after the Service on November 21, 1976. Two-thirds of the votes by active, confirmed members present were required for the call to be approved by secret ballot. The meeting's minutes state:

Results of the ballots showed that there were 212 votes cast, with 182 votes in favor, and only 30 not in favor. The two-thirds requirement number was 142.

The applause that followed spoke for the congregation's approval of the decision to call Pastor Rozen as Pastor of Salem. . . .

Respectfully submitted, Evelyn Greeley, Council Secretary²³

For the first time in the Pacific Southwest Synod's history, an associate pastor went on to assume the shepherd's staff in the same parish. Lee Rozen, a California educated graduate student, a non-missionary ordained pastor, a young (32) unmarried man, became only the third pastor in Salem's then thirty-one year history. Doomsday predictions that the parish would have to close its doors in a year or two were unfounded. Seventeen years after his election, he continues to shepherd the flock .

Pastor Rozen did not inherit this position. He had to go through all of the proper synodical channels and requirements to be elected for the vacancy. The congregation and he followed synodical policy. Pastor Rozen with much

²³ Council Minutes, 21 Nov. 1976.

grass-roots support, letters, and petitions, won the election fairly and squarely. All of this took place in a very challenging and stressful time for him. Pastor Rozen continued visiting the congregation, the hospitals, preaching, teaching, and celebrating the Sacraments wondering whether God still wanted him in this parish or not.

It was no easy task to assume the Salem pastorate following the thirty-year service of a well-loved pastor. Many ties, tender moments, and stories have been shared between the congregation and Pastor Robison. The Robison family still remain members of the parish, although they no longer function in any official capacity. This, too, was the Synod policy. As Bishop Lloyd Burke said to the congregation and to Pastor Rozen upon his installation in 1977, "The congregation will be frequently comparing your shoes, Lee, to the shoes of Pastor Robison; but remember this, Pastor Rozen, Pastor Robison took his shoes with him!" Those words of wisdom have often helped in the years since. It is difficult at times to be compared to a former, long and productive pastorate.

Pastor Rozen's ministry is different from that of the two previous pastors. He, too, is a product of his times. There is more involvement of the laity in the policy, administrative, financial, evangelism and worship areas of the parish. More active lay people are involved in all sorts of Christian ministry in the parish and outside. The Church Council President is no longer the Pastor. Change has taken place. That important role is filled by a lay person, and recently by a woman, for the first time in the parish's history. The gender barrier

in the presidency of the congregation has been broken. History has been made again. The roles of women have been greatly expanded. The women of Salem now serve as lectors, Liturgy Assistants, acolytes, van drivers, Property Committee Chair; they also minister in numerous new areas of community service as participants in Meals on Wheels, hospital volunteers, homeless rights advocates, abused women shelters, and the list goes on and on.

Other areas of more intense lay people involvement have been in areas of visitation by WELCA (Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church) members and DOTS (Daughters of the Spirit) members, the Prayer Chain, the Cursillo experience, the local programs of feeding the hungry, the homeless shelters, and other ecumenical endeavors.

Council Presidents, Benskin, Durkin, Green and Sedgwick, have often stated that Pastor Rozen is a teacher. It is one of his best traits. His sermons are informative, Bible oriented, and with relevance to modern times and needs. His classes are informal and thought-provoking. Questions from students are encouraged and appreciated.

The congregation is appreciative of his contacts with his own roots, and the roots of the Lutheran Church worldwide. He has close ties to Lutheran parishes in Norway, Poland and Israel. These friendships are celebrated. His tours to Europe and the Holy Land have been successful and memorable.

Pastor Rozen is a person of international values. He frequently recognizes world events in his sermons, prayers, and writings.

He performs the traditional pastoral duties with compassion and dedication. This is especially appreciated by the older

members of the parish.²⁴

Another important aspect of his ministry is the priestly role of celebrant. He assumes with great reverence and importance the role of celebrating presider over the sacramental acts of baptism, and the Holy Communion. When you have worshiped with him, you have celebrated the life of Jesus Christ. Pastor Rozen celebrates the liturgical year with much tradition, love, and meaning. He lives the church year. His sermons, letters, classes, and home reflect this. There is always something to celebrate, to give thanks for, to give courage and hope, even when things are not so good or so happy.²⁵

"Pastor Rozen celebrates Pentecost like no other around. His creative ideas often involve much labor and sensing. On Easter morning, when he gives you the flame from the Paschal candle and says, 'Christ is Risen!' he really believes that. . . ."²⁶

So this pastor then is a teacher, a celebrant, and also a connector. He connects all the aspects of the church year, the Scripture, the needs and times of the present, with the traditions and customs of the past. He has given his congregation an awareness of their roots, their part in the story of God's redemptive act through Jesus Christ. He helps to make those stories more real.²⁷

²⁴ Clyde Sedgwick, interview with author, Feb. 1994. Sedgwick is the current Salem Council President.

²⁵ Sharon Green, interview with author, Oct. 1993. Green has been the Salem Council President.

²⁶ Green interview

²⁷ Green interview.

Yet he still visits, counsels, and he, too, has become to a new generation of Salem parishioners a "father image." The visits now, unfortunately, are not as much to younger families and neighborhood members, but more often to older members, shut-ins, and parishioners who have moved out of the immediate neighborhood, but still consider Salem their church home. They, too, are still included in the story. Many of them have been a part of the story for most of their lives. Salem is important to them. They are concerned about its mission in the future.

The emphasis, mission, and goals of the pastor and congregation now are to evangelize through small groups, establish various social ministry services, promote Cursillo programs, and offer alternate worship experiences to build up the congregation. Thereby challenging all the parishioners to expand their community ministry and continue God's work in the area known as Whittier, California, and beyond.

There have always been good and proper relations between the pastoral changes. After Pastor Gerberding left, he left. But he and his wife were invited and participated in various special occasions in Salem's first years. When Pastor Robison retired, the family remained in the parish. As the years have passed, their influence, although highly regarded and appreciated, has diminished. Pastor Rozen and the Salem congregation have also included Pastor Robison and Doris in many of the special events of the continuing history and story of Salem Church. There is good communication between them. The Robisons are especially appreciative that Salem's history is being

written and shared within the congregation, community and Church.

Analysis

In order to assess the historical efficacy of Salem's three pastors, much more information and objectivity outside of the church offices would be needed. As an example, Pastor Gerberding was in office for only one and one-half years, as compared to Pastor Robison's thirty-year pastorate and Pastor Rozen's twenty-three year pastorate. It would be unfair to evaluate based on time alone. Also, since these are three separate personalities with varying leadership styles and different goals, we can only describe their roles and styles, short term or long term.

The common thread, however, that runs through their ministries is leadership, albeit with varying goals and methodologies. The times in which they worked also differed and placed different demands on them.

Pastor Gerberding, missionary and founder, acted as "Herr Pastor," which was probably necessary. He was the undisputed leader and guide for the congregation. His style was to come in, do the foundation work and leave as quickly as possible. Because of this style, he probably did not make numerous long-lasting friendships.

There is a hint from Synod headquarters that Gerberding was too strong-willed, single-minded and often went against their recommendations. According to the Parish Registry, he performed very few sacramental activities. There were no baptisms, no confirmations and no funerals. Two weddings were performed, with one being his own daughter's, in that brief tenure.

It is worth noting that Gerberding was 72 years old when the BAM sent him to California to establish the parish. How odd that they would send a sergeant-like senior citizen to organize such a young congregation. Either they had no one else to send or he was a successful mission developer. After all, he established twenty-two churches in his lifetime ministry.

He was an authority figure, "the general," a respected man and dynamic preacher. His congregation liked the style of his liturgy. In fact, his mannerisms were parallel to a military officer leading his troops into successful and victorious battle. With these military-like methods the parish was formed.

Pastor Robison was the builder of buildings and the congregation during the church's growing years. He was the chaplain, the caller and administrator. Since Gerberding was described as cold, Pastor Robison had to be warm to succeed. His successes were based on his personality of smiling and handshaking. Behind the energetic personality and physical successes, the congregation multiplied. Pastor Robison and his family were the Eastern family for whom the congregation was looking. To this day, the congregation speaks highly of his efforts and remembers his untiring devotion.

By comparison with Gerberding, Robison performed hundreds of baptisms, weddings, confirmations and funerals. Robison is perceived by some present-day members in the congregation as the strong grandfather who ran a no-nonsense business, yet he was able to effectively rally members to build the church edifice and expand the program.

He came to Salem as a young, energetic and enthusiastic family man.

The young members followed his leadership and by the time they were ready to build, he was able to obtain the necessary money and volunteer labor to create the edifice.

Pastor Rozen worked closely with him as both assistant and associate, which allowed him the opportunity to observe Robison's leadership style. Because of this collaborative ministry, Pastor Rozen was able to establish a perspective for himself which he later developed in other staff relationships.

Since there existed a limited mutual sharing during the joint pastorates of these two men, roles were kept separate and responsibilities were not always clearly identified. Pastor Rozen felt left out and often unneeded in this subordinate role and because of that has felt the need to be more inclusive in his own ministry, sharing mutual responsibilities and feelings with a broader group within the church.

Because of Rozen's involvement as assistant pastor he has realized specific ways to train other assistant pastors. He would allow them to preach more than one Sunday a month and celebrate the Eucharist and baptisms, as well as conduct marriage ceremonies and funerals more frequently. He would insist on weekly staff conferences to review weekly and monthly plans. He would encourage open and honest dialog and would stress equality and professionalism.

Pastor Rozen is the teacher, the celebrant and the connector in a difficult transition period in Salem's history, when the congregation is aging and society itself is changing. Unfortunately society today is not very family

oriented and does not see the local parish as important or relevant as in the past. It is against the norm today to attend Sunday worship and Sunday School. American society is experiencing a new phenomenon of apathy in its relationship with the Church.

Apathy and the decline in church attendance are affecting parishes in Whittier as in many mainline Protestant parishes of Southern California and much of the nation. The question might be posed, should we return to the position of military commander and grandfather to maintain membership? Or, must the Church itself change?

The leadership emphasis today is not the growing church, but the growing people of God for more service in the parish and in the world. The Sunday congregation is being trained and called to be an army in the field. The task of ministry now is to help equip the Body of Christ for this service that best suits the individual Christian's faith journey and particular life stage.

CHAPTER 4

The Ministry of the Laity

The Priesthood of All Believers

Lutherans believe that baptism is initiation, the inclusive rite of entrance into the holy Christian Church. It is the more important of the two sacraments and it is performed only once. Baptism, they believe, is the ordination of a new member into the Gospel priesthood. All of the laity if we use this in a biblical way, are priests and ministers of Christ's Church, and all the "ministers" are equally "laymen."¹

The people of God are defined and described in 1 Peter 2:9-10: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous life. Once you were no people but now you are God's people."

Martin Luther advocated the concept of the priesthood of all believers. For Luther, a priest is by definition a mediator, a go-between, in the relationship between God and humanity. So when Luther writes about the "priesthood of the baptized," he is very adamant that every Christian fulfills a mediating role between God and neighbor. "Far from eliminating priests from the church, Luther multiplied them. He broke up the monopoly which the clergy held on that function, and distributed the work of mediation to all members of the

¹ Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr. Theological and Biblical Perspectives on the Laity. n.p., 1987, 4-5.

body of Christ. Through baptism. . . all of us are consecrated to the priesthood.”²

This priesthood is shared and conducted in several ways. The clergy, the minority of Christian people, are to preach God’s Word and administer the holy sacraments. They are ordained to public, official functions of the priesthood in the church. The laity have their functions as priests as well. For Luther they are to pray for each other; listen to one another’s confessions; speak God’s cheering word of forgiveness and hope; and they are to be agents of the generous, unlimited love of God by ministering to the poor and oppressed. They are to be “little Christs” to each other, under Christ Jesus the high priest. “The Christian church is that community in which one hungry person is always telling another hungry person where to find food.”³

So the ministry of laity and clergy is caring, nurturing, witness and worship. The Christian Church consists of millions of baptized, trying to fulfill these obligations. Salem Church is a paradigm of this ministry. The ministry goes on inside the walls of the church plant, and it goes on outside of the walls of the church buildings. God is as interested in church edifices as he is in the construction of proper sanitation channels. Salem’s people have reflected this belief in their homes, places of employment, schools, and every day life in suburban Southern California. Ministry is not just done in a church building. It is not just happening on Sundays.

² Stuempfle, 7.

³ Stuempfle, 7.

Ministry is to serve. Service for and by all of God's people. This report from our Pacifica Synod Bishop Robert Miller sums up the whole ministry of the modern parish:

The writer of Hebrews states that Jesus did his redemptive work for us "outside the gate." Can we escape the implication that to be in Christ's ministry means that we focus our work on what happens "outside the gate," not on what happens inside the church? In other words, a smoothly run church made up of nice pleasant people is not our goal. Rather, we are called to "the place" where people hurt, where injustice prevails, where the environment is being polluted, where prejudice wounds, where AIDS kills, and where streets are unsafe. When this reality sinks in, any cockiness on our part will disappear, and easy answers and quick solutions will vanish. Our task becomes more difficult when we remember that we are called, not primarily to get people into church, but to get the Church into the world, "outside the gate." Jesus said his followers were to be "leaven" and "salt" to the community.⁴

As in other parishes, Salem's people are involved in all sorts of professions and occupations. They are weekly reminded during worship, educational classes or in auxiliary meetings that Christ is honored and the community served through their own respective ministries and witness, humble and inadequate, that it may be in the eyes of the parish members.

Salem Church uses group dynamics to help bring about this style of mission emphasis. It is a more traditional role, perhaps, but it works well for the parish. The popular saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," applies to the congregation in this area.

The role of Salem's laity will be examined and interpreted in the context

⁴ Bishop Robert Miller, "Bishop's Report to the Pacifica Synod," May 1989.

of defined parish ministries. These services and programs are best described as those that help build, nurture, educate, change and improve Salem Church and its role in being a part of God's vineyard.

The ministry of Salem is varied. Like a patchwork quilt, there are many large and small pieces that make up the whole program. Some of these are very important areas, and some are modest. Some have been successful over the years and some have served their purpose and have ended. New needs and concerns are always arising and they often are very challenging.

The mission program of the church, its purpose, direction, leadership, committees and agendas have usually begun with the Salem Church Council. This is the governing body of the parish. It consists of 12 elected lay people and the pastor. The congregation votes on these representatives at the Annual Congregational Meeting held in January. The council members' terms are usually for three years. Each person on the council has a specific role to perform or chairs a committee related to the mission of the parish.

There are five officers on the council. The President is a lay person; the Vice-President is the pastor; there is a Council Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer. These offices were established following the development of the parish community and its various needs. Pastors Gerberding and Robison were the Presidents of the Salem Council, Pastor Rozen consented to the request for more lay involvement and serves as Vice-President, rotating with the President the chairing of the monthly meetings.⁵

⁵ Constitution and By Laws, Salem Lutheran Church, 1982.

The council is installed at the Services following their election. This is a visual sign of the joint ministry that the congregation, council, and pastor share together. Members of the congregation are then encouraged to join various committees and be supportive and active in the work that is planned for the year. Members of the congregation are encouraged to attend the open council meetings if they wish, especially if there are grievances or concerns requiring parish action.

More or less, the varied ministries that relate to parishioners fall into one or more of the Church Council offices or committees. Circumstances and needs have sometimes arisen where exceptions or categories need to be especially dealt with on a one to one basis for the desired benefit of the church programs to help those in need or who are hurting. However, the work of the laity is by no means limited to just these specific committee areas.

Several times during the last few years, the Salem Council has invited a representative from the Whittier Interchurch Counseling Center (ICC) to present the Myers- Briggs Personality indicator test to the whole council. This has proved a valuable tool in group dynamics. It has been beneficial to the total efforts of the council and its committees within the congregation.

Salem's Council Committees

Salem's President, Vice-President, Council Secretary, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer do not head committees, although they serve on committees; the Council President and Pastor are ex officio members of all committees.

The Finance and Stewardship Committees are concerned with the use and development of the talents, time, and offerings of the congregation. The Stewardship Committee periodically makes surveys of the talents of the congregation. These surveys are sent to all members and are included in Sunday bulletins. They ask in what specific areas of service the church members would like to be involved, such as Christian education, social ministry, worship and music, property, evangelism or other areas. When these questionnaires are returned they are given to the respective committees to make use of these volunteer helpers. The Stewardship Committee orders the weekly offering envelopes and sees to their distribution to the worshipers at the end of the year. Those who forget to have their envelope boxes picked up have them delivered to their homes or sent by mail.

The Finance Committee is in charge of the yearly Church Budget. This is divided into Benevolent areas (those monies which go to the Pacifica Synod headquarters and other non-parish designations) and into the Current area (this includes salaries, parish property, utilities, local outreach, and the parish program within the congregational family). The Finance Committee sends out pledge slips for the new budget to all members and friends on the mailing list. These pledges are then collected and dedicated at the altar during Pledge Sundays. This helps determine what the congregation will vote on for the new budget at the Annual Congregational Meeting. This committee keeps account of the giving and spending of the church program. If encouragement is needed, articles are written in The Tidings and announcements are made

during Sunday Services by the laity. Occasionally appeals such as for Southern California Fire Relief, Earthquake Relief, or Midwest Flood Aid, are made by this committee to the members.

The Christian Education Committee oversees the Sunday School program, the Vacation Bible School, child-care staffing, Confirmation classes, First Communion classes, New Member classes, Adult Bible Studies, youth studies and general parish instruction in Christian growth and witness. Salem has long been very fortunate through the years having many capable teachers, staff members, and other volunteers in these education programs. There is a critical need presently, however, for more adult leadership in Sunday School classes. The pastor is the chief teacher in this parish. He is responsible for educating about fifty-percent of all classes offered.

The Property Committee was one of the first committees established. The most attention, other than calling on the neighborhood, in the early days of the parish, was the need for adequate facilities first to rent, and then to build, to house the total program of the parish. Salem's various building drives and pledge drives conducted with lay leadership and support are witness to this fact. So much volunteer lay service has been active in not only constructing the various buildings on the church lot, but also by generous help in maintaining the parsonages of the first, two pastors. This committee is in charge of general upkeep, furnishings, insurance needs, landscaping, church van, and recycling programs carried on by the congregation. Work parties, paint parties, crisis repair work, are needed periodically. Hundreds of church

members have helped in this ministry. It is on-going. It is important. It allows for the spending of funds in other more benevolent areas of program.

The Visitation Committee is one of the newest committees. It was made at the request of Pastor Rozen. Being the sole pastor of an older congregation was causing unrealistic expectations on the time and labor of the pastor. With an aging congregation, more people were being hospitalized, confined to their homes or convalescent institutions, and in grief situations that needed care and attention. As the results of this, the council established the Visitation Committee. This committee does hospital calling, nursing home visitations, home visitations, and sends cards and notes for various occasions or needs as they arise. The WELCA and DOTS groups of the parish also contribute to this ministry.

Social Ministry's concerns are varied. In the past the committee provided meals for families in mourning, luncheons following church funerals, and helped oversee the WELCA programs of helping monthly at California Lutheran Homes in Alhambra, Lutheran Social Services in Los Angeles and in Garden Grove, staffing the gift shop at California Medical Center (formerly California Lutheran Hospital) in Los Angeles, and Salem's Ruth Sewing Circle making lap robes, toys, slippers, and gift containers for the Veterans' Hospital in Long Beach, California Medical Center and Salem's shut-ins.

In the past five years, this committee has greatly expanded its influence and labor. With the change in the Southern California economy, the loss of many places of employment, and more and more hungry, homeless people, this

committee has responded.

On the third Sunday of each month this committee conducts a non-perishable food collection. The members are asked to donate food to be stored in the parish kitchen for needy individuals and families who come to the offices to receive help. Hundreds of bags of quality food are distributed by this committee with the help of the church secretary.

Joyce Sunahara, former church secretary, wrote in 1990 concerning these visitors coming to the parish for assistance. "Each case that we handle is a unique opportunity to extend the loving hand of Christ into the lives of those who have found themselves in a place of hardship. . . there but by the grace of God go I."⁶

The Salem Prayer Chain is directed by Ella Coy. This group of active parish members calls other committee members with recent hospitalizations, illness, grief, or other events in which prayer is requested. This Prayer Chain reminds the laity of their responsibility to pray for one another and also the power that prayer has to demonstrate God's concern and love for His children.⁷

Nadine Bergen and the Social Ministry Committee were very active with housing the homeless in recent years at Salem. Salem Church is part of the Whittier Interfaith Council, which is concerned with housing many hundreds of homeless individuals and families during the winter months in Whittier. Several churches and the local synagogue belong to this ecumenical council. The

⁶ Tidings, Feb. 1990.

⁷ Tidings, March 1990.

organization is almost exclusively managed by active lay parish members. Salem housed the homeless for several one or two week sessions over the past couple of years. They were housed in Robison Hall and the Child-Care Room. Two meals, breakfast and dinner, were provided for them. This was really a gigantic forward move in the parish life. The parish was active in giving money, food and clothing to this program. About twenty Salem members cooked, cleaned, and stayed overnight to manage the thirty to fifty nightly guests. The majority of the congregation supported this ministry. But there were some loud objections as to sanitation requirements and insurance liabilities. There were also two incidents of a more personal, but law-breaking nature by the homeless, that happened during these outreach times. Nevertheless, although the homeless are no longer housed overnight at Salem, because of inadequate restroom and sleeping facilities to separate the families from individuals, and stringent insurance requirements and penalties, the parish still gives money and voluntary assistance to this community wide, ecumenical venture.

The Evangelism Committee is very important. This area was of great interest and response when the parish was young and the neighborhood more homogeneous and Salem was the "only church on the block." But since the late 1980s the parish neighborhood is changing. More and more Latinos are living in the parish area. They are either Roman Catholic or Pentecostal. The whites in the area are usually older adults and members of other congregations, or younger adults who do not attend any church in the area.

Calling on homes is not the most popular of lay ministries. The Evangelism Committee, with the support of the pastor and council have attempted periodic neighborhood calling, newspaper advertising, and other outreach events, but they have not proved very fruitful as in the past. Different times have different needs and problems. Much more dedicated work needs to be extended by the whole parish in this very important program. The creation of more small group opportunities will hopefully help in this critical area.

The work, frustration, and inspiration of this challenging committee can be seen through the words of two Evangelism Chairpersons, Jim Trotter in 1973, and Sharon Green in 1986.

Evangelism is not a 'committee' function! It is a personal commitment.

If we as a congregation should take inventory of ourselves, we have done well. We have a beautiful, comfortable, debt-free facility. . . . Our financial report indicates that we have met all of our monetary commitments, both current and benevolent.

We must be prepared to witness and to be worthy of bringing people to Christ. The year 1973 will see great effort in calling the continent to Christ.⁸

The congregation and pastors participated in a program called Key 73. Some thirty-eight members of Salem under Jim Trotter's direction went into the community knocking on doors and talking to hundreds of people about Christ.⁹

⁸ Salem Lutheran Church, Evangelism Committee, Annual Report for 1972.

⁹ Salem Lutheran Church, Evangelism Committee, Annual Report for 1973.

Sharon Green, Evangelism Chairperson and Fortieth Anniversary

Chairperson, entitled her article to the whole parish family, "We Need You, Our Congregation."

Just like forty years ago when this mission church was established we have spent a year refurbishing our plant, getting ready for a strong outreach program. We have made ourselves a beautiful place to worship and to do the Lord's work. We again must reaffirm our call to mission outreach and gather God's people. For without God's children we have no church. Just as then, in this year 1986, we face a strong challenge of social and economic priorities for families, and our church must be ready to recognize these new differences. We must open our doors with understanding, love, and invitation to all, including parents without partners, elderly, singles, lonely, ill, poverty stricken and young, confused teens. We all need to hear God's Word. It takes all of the congregation working together extending a hand to another. No one person with the title of Evangelism Chairperson can begin to make a success out of a mission program. We need you, our congregation to volunteer your help and time. . . . Accept the invitation to celebrate our Fortieth Anniversary all year long and be a part of true missionary work.¹⁰

The Evangelism Committee is responsible for overseeing the New Member Classes that the pastor teaches and hosting welcome receptions following the installation of new members at the Services. Periodically this committee renews and updates the pictorial Congregational Directory.

Salem's Youth Committee is another recent addition. The congregation understands the importance of a vital, Christ-oriented, youth ministry. The youth are the future leaders of the parish. Therefore an official committee is designated for that age group with its numerous needs, challenges, and often unused resources.

¹⁰ Tidings, Jan.1986.

Over the parish's history the ministry to, with and among youth has been up and down. It was not really a priority in the early days. There was Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Released Time and some youth group work.

Eventually Luther Leagues were formed for the various ages of young people. An adult program for high school through college age was also established. This group existed and faded throughout the parish's history. It flourished when there was an intern, or an assistant pastor, and or dedicated lay leadership. But Salem has had ministry to youth through confirmation, First Communion, and teenage Bible study periods and retreats at Camp Yoliwja or Idylwild.

The youth have taken part in various worship experiences as acolytes, lectors, choir members, crucifers, and lay assistants. The observance of Santa Lucia is completely a youth sponsored event. They have helped by assisting or teaching in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. They have often taken part in repair work, painting and redecorating various areas of the parish plant. Some are involved in gardening. The youth have visited nursing homes, shut-ins and passed out parish literature concerning upcoming events to hundreds of homes.

Recently the Youth Chairperson, Judy Rambeau, has headed this important ministry. Much progress and activity have taken place. They have named themselves "The Flying Spirit." They have their own tee shirts and logo. "The Flying Spirit" group's agenda is filled with social, devotional, and parish and or community involvement. They are sharing, giving, creating and

growing at the same time.

One of the goals set for the next year is to have a paid staff member be employed as a youth advisor. The position is in the proposed budget. The search is beginning for a suitable leader.

The last committee and the most active is the Worship and Music Committee. This Committee is responsible for so much of the seen and unseen aspects of worship and music life of Salem Parish. It is one of the strongest areas of involvement and interaction. It involves the whole congregation.

Salem's liturgical life has always involved the laity. They participate throughout the worship experiences. Worship is not just the duty or role of the pastor and chancel assistants, or the choirs; worship, church attendance, Bible based meditations for life in the 1990s and Christian growth opportunities are part of the weekly ministry of this committee.

The Worship and Music Committee consists of the chairperson, the pastor, the organist, the choir director, those in charge of lectors, those in charge of ushers, the person who schedules the acolytes, the person who schedules the Assistants, an altar guild member and others. Meetings are held several times a year to plan the liturgical year correctly and enthusiastically. Their motto could be, "If you're going to do it, do it!" Many traditional observances are held. But they are not just observed for the sake of old times; they must have a biblical basis and meaning for today. However, the committee is open to experimenting with different Services, hymns, celebrations, and musical variations.

The laity is especially involved in such events as the bell choir rummage sales, spaghetti dinners and concerts. The congregation looks forward to participating in the Holy Week Services, Pentecost processional, Thankoffering Sunday observance, Hanging of the Greens and caroling to the shut-ins at Christmas.

The music department is staffed by a very capable organist, Jerry Holmes, and equally capable choir director, Gwen Woloshun. They work well together and with the pastor and congregation. They care about their ministry in the parish's spiritual life.

Analysis

One of the great beliefs of the Lutheran Church is that "all Christians are ministers." Therefore ministry is the work of the entire congregation. Ministry consists of both the call of all of the baptized and the office of the ordained. The issue of ministry is not one of status and worth, but one of calling and gifts, opportunities and responsibilities. The ministry of the Office of Word and Sacrament is the ordained ministry. (For the sake of good order not all can preach and celebrate the sacraments.) The ministry of the laity is the many ways that the Church serves the world apart from the Office of Word and Sacrament. All Christians are given gifts for ministry in and to the world that should be recognized, affirmed and supported. Unfortunately, the BEM document was very weak in recognizing and affirming this ministry.

Pastors find that the fine line existing between ordained and non-ordained ministries is a constant and conscious separation. Clergy are

reminded that the task of the laity as ministers is crucial. The members are encouraged to minister to others, whether family or neighbor, being validated and sent by the pastor with blessings and encouragement. The pastor has become the resource as well as the catalyst for the ministry of the laity. The pastor is to bring the laity a vision of a new tomorrow and to rally the resources that are needed to implement that vision. An important part of that vision is that the ministry of laity includes the ministry done in the every day work place. This is being accomplished through changes in attitudes and language so that "ministry" is used more broadly, and "minister" is applied to other than the ordained clergy, and "lay" is rescued from its implications of amateur or secondary status. This understanding of ministry has become a fact of Salem parish life, especially in the last two decades. The roles of the laity and their responsibility have been increased significantly. This is the result of group dynamics.

At Salem Lutheran, the Council represents the functioning and traditional body of leaders who operate the congregation. This Council is a committee consisting of twelve elected lay people and the clergy. This arrangement has worked well in the past and continues to operate today because the demographics of this parish indicate the majority are older citizens, and the more traditional systems work, with the pastor as head of the congregation working with the Council. However, new ideas and methods are being studied by this committee and the whole congregation and many of these have been implemented.

The great emphasis in today's preaching and educational methods is on the concept that the people of God need to serve the whole world through their various professions and occupations in the "priesthood of all believers." This is permitted and encouraged by the Church and by the individual parish and pastor.

Not so long ago at Salem, the ministry of the laity was thought to include women's service committees, sewing groups, teaching Christian education classes, singing in the choir, serving on the council, church property maintenance, doing evangelistic calling, attending synod functions and conventions, conducting money drives and acolyting. These were mostly "in house" positions. But this has changed. There are more "in house" positions available to the laity such as being a worship assistant, lector, Council president, or permission and encouragement to serve on committees and organizations in the community or synod representing Salem. However, a whole new emphasis on ministry of the laity is being accomplished outside the walls of the church buildings.

The baptized people of God are the Church wherever they go. The ministry of the laity is the Church at work in the everyday work of its members. The laity are the natural bridge by which the parish moves from the sanctuary to the streets and neighborhoods. They minister at the crossroads of what is Christianity and what is not Christianity. The laity are valuable and able ministers. It is through the witness of the laity that the Gospel will touch persons who never come into contact with clergy. The laity are often more "in touch"

rather than the clergy with what is really important and what is going on in everyday life. Often the clergy are too removed and too isolated from real life problems and opportunities to minister in these situations and needs.

Salem has a balance between old and new approaches. Change here is not negative, but positive, as indicated in this chapter by the expanded role of women in parish service and life. Other examples include a lay person as Council President and the Spanish language ministry being presently conducted at Salem.

For Christ to become real to the people of the parish, pastoral theology must become practice. The integration of theology and practice is vital. The laity, who are leaders, are taught that their ministry is a direct outgrowth of basic theology. Serving humankind is key in Lutheranism; thus by serving they are in direct participation of theological relevancy.

The life of the parish is a gathering and sending. The congregation gathers to offer praise and to receive God's grace. The parishioners are sent to exercise our daily priesthood. Pastor and congregation work hand-in-hand to achieve this interdependent ministry. Both parts are needed and appreciated.

When the various ministries of the Church are described, we are exploring the actual ways in which the Church translates theory into practice--the ways in which it fulfills mission. This includes not only worship and praise, but also evangelism, youth programs, women's interest groups, housing and feeding the needy, Laubach literacy work, shut-in visitations, hospital public relations services, and all the everyday ministry in the work place, schools and

homes among our peers, neighbors and families.

The Church is the people of God; the laos. Each church member is unique, but each is called by the same Lord in our baptism, into one, holy, universal, sent-out Church with a message and mission. As stewards of the talents God gives to each member, the members are to use these unique gifts in ways that will contribute to the welfare of the whole people of God. Ministry is the substance and stuff of all of our labor. Our gifts help the Church to do and be in that work, wherever the work place.

Ministry is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those who acknowledge no faith, people of other faiths, and adherents of other ideologies. It is to take part in God's life-giving purpose for all people, especially by being in solidarity with and by advocating for people who are oppressed, poor and suffering. Salem's recent programs of housing the homeless, the food bank, and supporting the synod's various social programs in these areas of concern are good examples.

The laity of Salem have inaugurated the parish's environmental programs. This is followed through with programs for the Sunday School, youth and adults. Salem's people are more aware today than ever before of the constant need for cleaning up the environment, and carefully guarding all of God's creation and creatures. The lay-sponsored recycling program has continued for about seven years.

Ministry also needs to seek effective ways of relating to and cooperating with churches around the world that will express the unity of the Body of Christ

and further mission of the Church. This continues to be seen by Salem's offerings and physical support of the Gideons, Jews for Jesus, Lutheran Bible Translators, ELCA missionaries in various nations, assistance to our sister churches in former East Germany, Poland and occupied Jordan, Lutheran World Action and Lutheran World Relief drives for assistance in disaster-struck areas such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Bosnia and El Salvador.

The local congregation supports the ELCA Lutheran University in Southern California, Camp Yolijwa, and the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary with financial support and by sending students.

Constantly placed before the congregation by Pastor Rozen is the plight of the Native Americans and the need for servicing the Navajo Lutheran Mission at Rock Point, Arizona. Trips have been conducted by laity and Pastor Rozen to the Navajo Reservation in order to take clothing, toys and food and to heighten the awareness of serving and building stronger lay leadership in service.

Because of its Scandinavian roots, Salem has supported Scandinavian festivals, concerts, lectures and art exhibits in various southland communities by renting a bus and attending.

Locally, Salem parish members support and attend the annual Hillcrest Congregational Church Art Festival in Whittier, which includes original worship forms, dance, art and music. This serves to further unify the laity and develop a broader cultural outlook, thus bringing more openness to Salem's own Lutheran worship experiences.

Laity has also walked in the footsteps of Jesus and his disciples and Martin Luther by actually journeying to the lands of Israel and Germany. Pastor Robison conducted a Holy Land tour in the early 1970s, followed by Pastor Rozen's study tours to both Israel and Germany. Such study tours encourage networking and unification, and create common ground to develop lay awareness.

In the near future, the author is planning to host a tour for interested parish members to see first-hand ministry in several once Soviet dominated nations. This itinerary will include Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the Luther sites in a now united Germany, and the Lutheran lands of Estonia and Latvia. This tour intends to educate the participants in global Christian problems, as well as unify the congregation in its common world mission. Other benefits would be to enlighten and sensitize those participants, and to communicate and worship with our fellow Christians in these countries.

Questions that may be asked would often pertain to church ministry in these places. Is the Church presence in these nations stronger or weaker now after freedom has been won? Has materialism taken the place of strong religious convictions? What are the differences in ministry in the church of these nations between the ordained and non-ordained Christian?

Salem Church embraces the future. It is a toddler in the age of church bodies, even in the United States! The national and synodical meetings of this new church body have strongly urged all of its member congregations to review their current parish constitutions and to seriously consider adopting a

new nationwide congregational constitution. This is a model constitution with several variations for the parishes to select from for their own individual congregation's needs. This model constitution, with minor revisions, has been adopted by about fifty congregations in Salem's own Pacifica Synod. Always faithful to its roots and the recommendations of the national body, Salem Church needs to address this document.

The congregation's present constitution has been studied and updated several times during its forty-eight year history, but it is not adequate for today's parish. It is outdated, unrealistic and unworkable in several areas. By adopting the model constitution of the ELCA, Salem will have a more current document for congregational ministry and government. The document gives more green light for the possibility and probability of more active and diverse lay ministry. This new model constitution affirms the ministry of the laity more profoundly without taking away the office and responsibilities of the ordained pastor. Individualism is more strongly affirmed in this new constitution.

Two areas of concern in the present Salem constitution that need revision pertain the Salem Council membership. It is not feasible as in the past, for the current size congregation to have twelve elected lay people serving at all times. Ten Council members would be a more realistic size. In addition, most Council members do not wish to have a three-year term of office with the possibility of reelection. They prefer to have a two-year term with the possibility of reelection. These changes would encourage more people to run for office and not think that Council service is a "life sentence."

Salem's Council also needs further revisions that will not be corrected in any constitution. An important focus will be to discover ways to make these volunteers (i.e. the Council) a more unified body with feelings of importance. Volunteerism in America is a major expression of directly helping others. Perhaps the Lutheran Church in general needs to compliment its faithful servants.

Pastor Rozen would like to continue the reward observances for volunteers. "Strokes for folks," so to speak. They were often held in Salem's early years. These observances were beneficial and appreciated by the laity. This practice has not taken place very often in the last decade. Salem's Council and pastor should acknowledge the work, prayers, leadership, creativity, contributions, long-time support and vision of Salem's members. The laity need to be reaffirmed. Recognition in this manner needs to be held at least twice a year. This would be accomplished through special events, dinners, certificates or token gifts. (Plans are in the early stages for appropriate celebrations of the laity's varied ministry during the fiftieth anniversary year. Much of the information needed for these events comes from consulting the parish records of previous special congregational anniversaries. These recommendations will be used throughout the special anniversary year.)

Salem's laity have not allowed a self-centered parish. It is not a very introverted parish. The laity did not follow the idea, "Let God do it!" The laity know they are Jesus' hands and feet not only in Salem, but in the world today. The congregation has developed a sense of mission history through education

and pulpit.

In the past, Salem has dealt with issues such as school integration, racial discrimination, and the ordination of women. Different social issues and concerns will continue to be discussed and debated in the future. But these topics will include more input from the observations and opinions of the laity.

The Salem Council is in the process of studying important ELCA documents concerning human sexuality. It will perhaps be a painful and sensitive educational process for this governing body and further discussions will be opened to the whole congregation. The parish needs to tackle these issues on the local level and the results will be shared with the whole ELCA.

Serving has historically remained foremost in Salem Church, whether by the volunteer laity or paid clergy. The congregation exists as an extended family unit. Therefore, with a father, a mother, and many children, this family in order to grow, must like a family, confront issues, wrestle with finances, plan their moves, and live and die with each other. Salem must because of its very nature be more honest and open, a family where problems are confronted, not avoided. The family members will thus emerge as resisters of each other.

Ministry is complex. It will, of necessity, be more encompassing in the future. The laity need to be more adequately trained to assume their proper roles doing ministry. The synods must be more helpful in this important area. Pastors, too, need to allow for more time in their schedules to help equip the parishes' ministers to do ministry.

Ministry develops our gifts as a Church, and acknowledges our

limitations. It is common knowledge at Salem that we must also embrace the gifts that others have in engaging in global mission. Salem Church tries to extend her ministry each year as more of the congregation understands the work, goals and belief in the priesthood of all believers.

It has become increasingly important to realize that the structure (i.e. organization) has given security to the present. The congregation has relied on age-old traditions, both liturgical and organizationally, which means that without its history, Salem would be floundering.

What has changed is not the construction of a church, but the subjective new problems such as family values, unemployment, drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, etc.

To address these new issues, study groups, education materials, and pulpit reinforcement are being organized. Attitudes of this older congregation will require more training in accepting and acknowledging problems from which they may feel estranged. It is an extremely sensitive issue when these problems are presented to those who have closed minds about these difficult areas.

By writing this history the actual accomplishment of an average American congregation has been placed before me. The painful realization is that few stark changes, or earth-shattering events, have been made through the years. But the beauty lies in the familial respect of people drawing closer to God and to one another. The parish history becomes similar to writing a history of one's own family, nothing dramatic or scandalous.

CHAPTER 5

Salem's Worship Life

Humble Beginnings

The first Service of the congregation known today as Salem Lutheran Church was celebrated on Sunday afternoon, September 9, 1945. It was held in a rented upstairs hall near the corner of Hadley Street and Whittier Boulevard. The furnishings were sparse, chairs had to be borrowed from the American Legion. Salem's beginnings were humble.

Following the Ash Wednesday Service on March 6, 1946, the people of this West Whittier Lutheran mission held a congregational meeting and voted to join in affiliation with the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA). They selected a name---Salem United Lutheran Church. (Salem comes from the Semitic languages and means "peace.") The other names that were suggested are unknown. The adults who were present signed their respective names to the official Charter Roll. A parish had been born.¹

Founding Pastor Gerberding stayed only a little more than a year at Salem. There are no surviving bulletins or records of the exact Services from his tenure in the parish. It can only be surmised that he conducted a typical, traditional Lutheran Service from the Common Service book of the ULCA. This was the normal practice in those days. Few pastors or congregations varied from that established practice.

¹ Salem Lutheran Church, "Dedication Booklet."

However, bulletins do survive from the early days of Pastor Robison's ministry. Salem Church has about ninety-nine percent of all the Service bulletins up to the present time in the archives. The very first issues of these church bulletins from 1947 depict Salem's altar in its temporary state on each cover. These were drawn by Pastor Robison. After a few weeks of these, the ULCA publishing house bulletins were used. (The official publishing house of the parish today, Augsburg Fortress, still provides the majority of the Service bulletins.)

On May 21, 1947, Pastor Robison also began the official newsletter of the parish, The Tidings. The bulletins, council minutes, and The Tidings provide many details on the worship life, its traditions and changes, in the parish.²

It was difficult to use rented quarters for worship. Nothing was permanent. All furniture that would slightly resemble a sanctuary had to be removed immediately following the conclusion of the Service. There was no organ. The only music was provided by a piano. The choir had to rehearse in different homes of the congregation each week. Because the second location was a Moose Lodge, Pastor Robison had to preach looking at a large mounted moose head above the exit door during each Service! There was no permanent place for meditation or non-Sunday visits.³

² The Tidings, 21 May 1947.

³ David Robison, interview.

Worship in the First Sanctuary

What a blessing, convenience, and good experience it was to worship in a proper church sanctuary when the first unit was completed and dedicated on May 16, 1948. Hundreds of people were inside and outside of the building for the Dedication Service. Dr. Beasom dedicated the Spanish style building with its handmade leaded glass windows, pews, pulpit and altar. The sacramental vessels were placed on the altar with its newly sewn paraments. The parishioners had participated so much in not only the construction of the building, but in furnishing it as well. These were considered worshipful acts by the congregation. They were very much interested in making the Services and sanctuary beautiful and appropriate for Divine Worship.⁴

Shortly after the building was dedicated, the parish purchased the borrowed organ that they were using. This musical instrument that contributed so much to the Services was donated by various members and friends of the parish.⁵

There was one piece of traditional furniture that was lacking in this Lutheran sanctuary, and that was a communion rail. There was not enough room for this item in the chancel area. The Holy Communion was distributed to the faithful coming to the altar area and standing to receive the elements. (This

⁴ Service Bulletin, May 16, 1948.

⁵ David Robison, interview.

situation lasted until the second sanctuary was constructed.⁶)

It is of interest to record Pastor Robison's message to the congregation concerning the lack of a communion rail and kneelers:

All of us are acquainted with the varied forms of worship. Among Lutherans themselves there are many different customs. But we all readily agree that the form is not foremost in worship. Rather it is in content and meaning that matter most.

Many of us, your pastor included, like the practice of kneeling for parts of the Communion Service. But because of added expense and space requirements it was not possible to make this practicable. Perhaps eventually we can make provision for it. Meanwhile, let us consider that kneeling is but the expression of an attitude toward God and that we may and ought to have the attitude regardless of the posture we assume.⁷

The Advent and Christmas season was especially happy and beautiful with all the special events that took place in the new building. The parish's first Candlelight Service took place on Christmas Eve with the emphasis on lovely music by the choir and soloists.⁸

The pastor's report for that year stated that four Communion Services were held with a total of 107 members receiving the Sacrament of the Altar. The average attendance was 111, double that of figures while in rented quarters.⁹

⁶ David Robison, interview.

⁷ Service Bulletin, 8 June 1948.

⁸ Doris Robison, interview with author, June 1993. She is the wife of Pastor David Robison and a member of the congregation.

⁹ "Pastor's Report for 1948," [David Robison], 30 Jan. 1949.

As the parish rolls grew larger, there were more opportunities for worship and praise. Salem's Music and Worship Committee organized four choirs for the youngsters and youth, and an adult choir. The musical selections became more professional and diverse.

Easter Sunday, 1950, had several different worship opportunities. The 8:00 a.m. Service was non-traditional, with many musical selections, solos, duets, anthems, poetry readings and Scripture. There was no sermon. At 9:45 a.m. a simple, non-choral Holy Communion Liturgy was observed. The 11:00 a.m. Service was traditional with a meditation and special choral anthems. During this same Holy Week period Holy Communion was celebrated on Maundy Thursday in the sanctuary, but there was no Good Friday observance. Salem encouraged its people to attend the Union Service at noon in one of the Uptown parishes. This Service was sponsored by the Whittier Ministerial Association.¹⁰

About this same time the Sunday School facilities were expanded. These new additions were observed with ground-breaking, cornerstone laying and dedications. The congregation, council and pastor, all took part in these milestone events. These Services always included Synod dignitaries, sometimes the Synod President (the equivalent of a bishop) or his representative, the former pastor and family, guest pastors, city officials, and other special guests. Usually these ceremonies were followed by refreshments or receptions hosted by the ladies of the parish, the Council, or the parsonage

¹⁰ Service Bulletin, 19 March 1950.

family.

In 1952 a Good Friday Service was held in the evening in the sanctuary. The attendance was good. The Service consisted of a sacred cantata on the Seven Last Words of Jesus Christ with the adult choir and several soloists. This Service, like the Maundy Thursday Service, with some variances, remains on the parish calendar each year. Many congregational members make a special point of attending these Holy Week solemn liturgies, despite the fact that they might not attend the Wednesday Lenten Vespers.¹¹

That same year, 1952, the Sunday School children wanted to present the neighborhood with a special Christmas greeting. The children gave donations towards the purchase of plywood, paint and nails, for a simple, outdoor nativity scene. The scene was built by several men and women of the congregation. This scene is on the front lawn of the parish each year at Christmas time. It proclaims to the neighborhood the true meaning of the Christmas season. It is the birthday of Jesus. And its message is that Jesus came to the world to pay a debt he didn't owe, because we had a debt we couldn't pay.¹²

Attendance figures climbed higher in 1953. At the three Services on Easter Sunday the combined attendance was 770. That same day the Sunday School departments held their own informal worship exercises with 473

¹¹ David Robison, interview.

¹² Service Bulletin, 21 Dec. 1952.

students.¹³ Salem Church was in its prime time as far as attendance figures proclaimed for worship and Sunday School attendance. It was still the only non-Missouri Synod Lutheran congregation in the city. There were no other church buildings in the immediate neighborhood.

Confirmation as a Worship Experience

The Lutheran Church is noted for its practice of intense confirmation instruction for youth who are usually in the eighth or ninth grades. Usually this means that the students attend weekly class sessions at the church and are often required to be at worship. Many times, too, they have to take sermon notes and discussed them the next week. These same youth are encouraged to participate as acolytes, crucifers, lectors, or choir members. A large portion of their curriculum is the study of Scripture and worship practices. Various group worship experiences are part of the study sessions. Traditional and non-traditional forms of worship are reviewed and practiced. Typical of this practice was Confirmation Sunday, June 6, 1954, the Festival of Pentecost. Twenty-seven youth were confirmed. The class had been studying for nine months, two hours each Saturday morning, with the class being taught by Pastor Robison and Mr. Arthur Bruhns.

Each member of the class was presented by the Sunday School either a Bible or a Common Service book with the confirmand's name imprinted in gold letters on the cover. On that same day, the class presented a gift of thanks to the congregation. This day it was a two foot ceramic copy of "The Christus" by

¹³ Service Bulletin, 12 April 1953.

the Danish Lutheran sculptor, Thorwaldsen. (The original is in the Lutheran Cathedral of Our Lady in Copenhagen.) The statue was placed on the altar of the first sanctuary each time the Holy Communion was observed. Unfortunately, the statue was accidentally broken years later, and an arm was irreplaceably shattered.¹⁴

Confirmation Day 1993 saw a class of eleven confirmed. The class was unique. Twin sisters, two adults, a mother and teenage daughter, were among the students. One adult was of Church of England background. She was a native of Hong Kong. She often was asked by Pastor Rozen to describe her experiences of being a Christian in a non-Christian environment. The class was a challenge and a blessing. The ages were significantly varied along with each student's Christian upbringing. These varied from newly baptized youth to students who attend a neighboring Lutheran grammar school and were raised in the parish from infancy. The young people really enjoyed the unusual adult class members. And these adult members really helped the youth with their requirements and reactions to the confirmation experiences. The class members each selected their own Scripture verses that would be a part of the Confirmation Service of blessing.

Tenth Anniversary Observance

The parish observed its Tenth Anniversary of organization on March 11, 1956. During the Service of thanksgiving and celebration, it was noted that by that date 217 people (including 125 youth) were instructed and confirmed in

¹⁴ David Robison, interview.

the Lutheran faith. Baptisms performed in the parish totaled 337 children and 25 adults for a total of 362. The pastors had officiated at 80 weddings and 78 funerals. The Gospel had been preached and the sacraments administered to the faithful for a decade. Worship was the heart of this parish.¹⁵ Salem Church was a typical model of mainline Protestant congregations in Southern California suburbia. It was a parish supported by the worship attendance of neighbors. Many of these neighbors were white families with several children. It was part of American life for these folks to attend Services and Sunday School.

Evangelism and Worship

Many times during its history the parish has had certain Evangelistic Services. These were times of study, prayer, and praise. They were to encourage the members, reactivate the inactive, and go out to share the Gospel message of Jesus Christ with the community. One such series occurred in 1957 with Pastor Reisch as a guest speaker at five evening Services. From this intensive evangelistic mission, Salem sent out thirty-three lay visitors around the city. Many calls were completed and over 177 persons were interviewed. From these visits, sixteen enrolled in an information class taught by the pastor, twelve desired to transfer their membership to Salem, eleven children received baptism, and two children joined the Sunday School.¹⁶

¹⁵ Service Bulletin, 11 March 1956.

¹⁶ Service Bulletin, 17 Feb. 1957.

The Service Book and Hymnal Introduced

Salem began the use of the latest inter-Lutheran hymnal in 1958. This red Service Book and Hymnal was a long time in coming. Many years of discussions and disagreements among the churches that would make up the Lutheran Church in America finally came to fruition. The “red hymnal” as it would be affectionately called, gave a more catholic selection of hymns, Occasional Services, and different musical settings for the Holy Communion Liturgy. This book replaced the Common Service in use since 1917. This red hymnal had been accepted by more than two-thirds of all the Lutherans of the United States and Canada. The primary reason for this new worship tool was to help the worshiper come closer into communion with the Triune God. It updated the more archaic language of the 1917 hymnal and brought the Gospel and the worship experiences more in touch with the lives and needs of the average parishioners. This Service Book became a much loved instrument in worship. Many active church members were very much displeased when this hymnal would be eventually replaced. Two members of Salem Parish walked out of the Service when its replacement was dedicated. They have never returned.

Second Sanctuary Happenings and Changes

Salem’s present sanctuary was dedicated for the worship of Almighty God and the proclamation of the Gospel In April, 1961. The new sanctuary provided a larger area for worship events. The nave, chancel and choir loft have more room for the weekly liturgical observances. A communion rail was part of the furnishings. Kneeling was the normal position for receiving the Holy

Communion. An altar sacristy helped the women prepare the altar flowers, communion vessels, and housed the church year paraments. The whole new facility was a warm, yet spacious, modern setting for "the work of the people," the liturgy.

On November 19, 1961, a new organ was dedicated for use in the new edifice. This was a new and larger Allen Model TC 1 organ. Doris Robison, Salem's organist, Dr. William F. Connell, Jr., guest organist, and the choirs performed a special, inspirational musical offering on that day.¹⁷

After about fourteen years of use and with needed expensive repairs another organ was presented to the parish with the generous donations of many families and individuals of the congregation. The computerized Allen 310 C was dedicated on June 15, 1975. A set of Maas-Rowe Carillon chimes were rewired to the new organ so that the chimes in the sanctuary and in the church tower could be played as a special stop. The organists for that dedication were Doris Robison and Eric Nelson, choir director.¹⁸

Worship should not be stagnant in time, but should speak to the people, and let the people speak in turn. The new building gave cause for changes and new additions in the on going worship life of the parish.

One of these additions was the Good Friday Service first observed in 1962. This Holy Week Liturgy truly was a vehicle to involve the congregation, lay assistants, acolytes, choirs and the pastor in a very moving and dramatic

¹⁷ Doris Robison, interview.

¹⁸ Service Bulletin, 15 June 1975.

observance of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. This “Tenebrae Service,” or the “Service of Shadows,” reenacts the words of the Lord from the cross. With each successive word, the sanctuary grows darker, ending with the death of the Lord, and complete darkness in the church. The Good Friday Service with certain yearly adjustments or modification is commemorated to the present.¹⁹

During the same year, 1962, the bulletins began to be printed with the liturgical lessons for the day. This allows the congregation to read along as the First Lesson, Second Lesson and Gospel text from the Bible for the appropriate day is read from the Lectern Bible. This addition has made it easier for the congregation to understand and review the lessons and the theme for the Service and, when they return to their homes to use them for personal devotion and religious reflection.²⁰ But it has not helped in some cases of people not wishing to bring their Bibles to church, or personally using the Bibles located in the pew racks during the reading of the lessons from the lectern.

As with the general trend in the Lutheran Churches in the United States, Salem Parish discussed the reasons for the observance of more frequent Communion Services. This was the original practice of the Lutheran Church in the period of the Reformation. The Salem Council in the summer of 1965 voted to offer the Sacrament of the Altar more often.

Generally the plan will be to offer Communion on the First

¹⁹Service Bulletin, 20 April 1962.

²⁰Service Bulletin, 7 Oct. 1962.

Sunday of each month (at the Early Service one month and at the Later Service the next month.) On special occasions such as World-Wide Communion Sunday the Sacrament will be administered at both Services.

According to their need, and opportunity, members may thus receive the Lord's Supper as often as once each month.²¹

Special Observances

The 450th Anniversary of the Reformation was celebrated around the world in 1967. Salem Parish, along with 500 Lutheran churches of all synods, took part in hosting the largest Lutheran gathering in the United States. It was also the largest gathering to take place in the history of the Los Angeles Sports Arena. The Great Reformation Rally was witnessed by thousands in the congregation, a massed choir of 1,500 voices, a dramatic presentation with several Hollywood personalities, students from California Lutheran College and distinguished clergy.

Folk Masses and other liturgical expressions of worship were gaining importance and frequency of celebration in the 1960s and 1970s. Salem, too, was trying to accommodate the young members of the congregation with alternate forms of worship. Bob Mizerak, Salem's second seminary intern, combined three great elements of liturgical music into one worship experience on July 14, 1968. A Continental Chant was sung by Don Holmes, Bob Payton lead the congregation with the singing of the folk song, "Blowin' in the Wind," and Joe Hudson played liturgical jazz. The bulletin explained to the congregation:

²¹ Service Bulletin, 13 June 1965.

The Liturgical Jazz element of improvisation is probably the oldest contribution to the Christian Church, but the least used today. Unfortunately, many white Americans have given it an inferior label because of its "cops and robbers" connotation in the mass media and its subjective association with Black Society. This morning its improvisational elements are used to express Christian spontaneity and the fact that God and His Church are not Static Beings but always Becoming.²²

That same year Bob Mizerak used the dialog sermon with Sander Monson. The title of this pulpit/lectern preaching was "The Offer of Mercy." It was a symbolic exercise as a sermon of involvement, with two speakers sharing a common text, and with the congregation urged to be involved as the Community of Believers.²³

Assistant Pastor Rozen helped introduce a Contemporary Communion Service on Pentecost Evening, May 21, 1972. He spoke on "Eat, Drink and Be Merry." Pastor Rozen wore for the first time at a Salem Service a chasuble, the ancient vestment of the Service of Holy Communion. It is widely used by Lutheran Churches in parts of Europe, Africa and South America. It was beginning to be more prevalent in the United States. Pastor Robison and several young adults took part in the Service. Following this introduction Contemporary Communion Services were taking place more often. Holy Communion was now celebrated at least on two Sundays during a month. This was to have the congregation partake in the Service of Confession and in the forgiveness of sins that is proclaimed and celebrated in the Eucharist. (Holy

²² Service Bulletin, 14 July 1968

²³ Service Bulletin, 19 May 1968.

Communion on the first Sunday of the month is not necessarily frequent enough. There is no biblical directive about this American phenomenon of “first Sunday” observance. The Scriptures remind us that the early Christians “broke bread” on the First Day of the week.)

Twenty-Fifth Anniversary

Jim Dwyer was in charge of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the organization of the parish. This special occasion was celebrated with several different events: an Open House, a catered banquet and a festive Service at the conclusion of the week-long events, on Sunday, March 7, 1971. This worship Service saw a special recognition of the Sunday School teachers, past and present. The preacher for the day was church contractor and friend, the Rev. Dr. Edward Spirer. He had been closely involved in two of Salem’s major building programs.²⁴ Dr. Spirer was a converted Jew who was, before Lutheran ordination, a building contractor and helped design and construct many Lutheran church sanctuaries and additions in the Southern California area. Salem’s first sanctuary was his first project for the Pacific Southwest Synod of the LCA and Salem’s present sanctuary was the last of his building projects for the same Synod. His memory is greatly revered among the older members of the parish. They particularly admired his sense of humor, method of getting the task completed and his loyalty to Jesus. He often cooked meals for the volunteer workers on his projects.

²⁴Jim Dwyer, interview.

Memorial Gifts as Aids to Worship

As the parish grew older and had retired all of its building debts, people looked for special memorial projects to help beautify the sanctuary and provide for Christian education experiences. In the middle 1970's and onward memorial gifts such as sterling silver communion vessels were given. These included the usual silver trays of glasses, but now also a chalice, paten, and flagon were in use. They were purchased to show the continuity of the Church and the oneness that we have as Christian people. These symbols were visual reminders of "one cup, one bread, one body" that the Holy Supper demonstrates to the faithful. New paraments from Belgium were also obtained in the latest liturgical style and colors of red, white, green, purple and blue. A large antique church bell was salvaged from New England and is rung before the Services. This is an auditory symbol of the church. The neighborhood can hear that a church is nearby and when it offers public opportunities of worship. It is a welcome sound. Another auditory symbol was the introduction of several octaves of English hand bells to enhance the music of the Services. These handbells also offer about twelve or more participants (the Bells of Praise Choir) an opportunity to give musical expressions of praise. Salem's Council, staff, and Music and Worship Committees have included all of these memorials in the worship life and ministry of the parish.

Bicentennial Observed

During the whole year of 1976, Salem, like the nation, observed in various ways the birthday of the United States. The major celebrations were on

Saturday, July 3, 1976 and Sunday, July 4, 1976. The Saturday event was an all parish birthday party. About 355 people enjoyed that evening event.

Sunday, July 4, 1976, was the two hundred year anniversary of the birth of the United States. A congregation of 260 gathered in Salem's sanctuary for a very colorful, patriotic Service. It was an Eucharist, a thanksgiving to Almighty God for the nation and for independence. Salem's Boy Scout Troop, Girl Scout Troop, Brownie Troop, and Sunday School children all played active parts. The Service combined the traditional Lutheran Communion with patriotic elements and national songs. At eleven o'clock, the congregation paused for several minutes to join in the nationwide ringing of church bells as a salute to our nation's birthday. The President of the United States asked for this expression of celebration. Doris Robison, the organist, sounded Salem's bells in the sanctuary and from the tower. This event was truly a birthday celebration of love and fellowship. It was shared with guests visiting the parish for the weekend from Lutheran churches in West Germany.²⁵

But not all things were red, white and blue during that year. The Evangelism and Worship and Music Committees sponsored a special Lenten devotional season called "The Cross Bearer Program." This special five-week emphasis was designed to help the parishioners discover in their own lives the meaning of the cross of Christ Jesus for the modern world. At the Services on the First Sunday in Lent, the pastors presented to each worshiper a special gift, a small metal cross for each of them to keep for five weeks. Then they could

²⁵ Service Bulletin, 4 July 1976.

return it to the church or they could keep it forever. The words "In the Cross of Christ I Glory" were imprinted on each cross. This Lenten devotional series was one of the most successful in the history of Salem Church.²⁶ It was personal, meaningful and easy to understand. The message was simple: Jesus is Lord of our lives.

The Staff of the Shepherd is Passed

Pastor David Robison retired from his pastorate at Salem on December 31, 1976. A special recognition and observance of his thirty years as the pastor of the parish was held on January 9, 1977. Doris Robison, Salem's faithful organist for almost as many years, also retired at the same time. A "This is Your Life" program and reception were held in the sanctuary and Robison Hall. Many of the congregation, family members and friends from over the years were in attendance. Many guests spoke at the observance. Pastor Robison said in jest, "They celebrated more when I left, than when I came!"²⁷

On January 1, 1977, Associate Pastor, Lee Rozen, became the third pastor of Salem Parish. He was to be installed at a festive, well attended, ecumenical celebration later on that month.

The first Sunday in that year, Salem, with the Council's recommendation, began a new practice that continues to this day--the regular participation of lay people as lectors, readers of lessons during the Services. This allowed the members to take a still more active role in the liturgy. The normal practice now

²⁶ The Tidings, March 1976.

²⁷ David Robison, interview.

would be that men, women, and confirmed youth would read the two lessons at the Service with the pastor reading the Gospel.²⁸

Another change begun in 1977 was the celebrating of the Holy Communion at the Christmas Services. This was the first time since the Christmas of 1945 that this occurred.²⁹ The response from the congregation was very much in favor of retaining this addition. They liked the celebrating of Christ's gift of the Sacrament of the Altar on the occasion of the festival of his nativity.

Sunday, May 7, 1978, was "Lay Persons' Sunday" at Salem. This was a yearly parish custom---usually held when the Synod was in convention in the Los Angeles area. But on this day, it was really "Lay Womens' Sunday." This was the first time that Salem women conducted the entire Services. This included the lay preacher, the liturgist, the lectors, crucifer, acolytes, and ushers! Ray Benskin, Caryle Steves, and Pastor Rozen were part of the 700 delegates at the Synod Worship Service. Pastor Rozen wrote in the Salem bulletin for that unique day, "Women, long the chief supporters of the modern Church, have been neglected or often forbidden to use their talents in the field of preaching and worship. We are 'the priesthood of all believers' and it is right that we all are ministers for Christ."³⁰

²⁸ Service Bulletin, 2 Jan. 1977.

²⁹ Service Bulletin, 25 Dec. 1977.

³⁰ Service Bulletin, 7 May 1978.

The Greening of Worship

Salem's Church Council in September, 1978, approved the use and order of the new Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) to be used in the parish beginning that Advent season. Over 225 of these green hymnals were dedicated. They are the chief tool in most of the liturgies that are conducted at Salem. Although free Services, and other alternate hymns, and liturgies also are used.

With this new hymnal and the accompanying pastor's Occasional Service Book, there were many alternate and additional Services and observances. Many of these were restored from the Early Church and from traditional Lutheran observances in Reformation Europe.

The Festival of Pentecost was elevated to much more importance with Pastor Rozen's and the Worship and Music Committees suggestions and research. Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian Church, was commemorated as a birthday. Holy Communion was celebrated, people were encouraged to wear the color red, the color of the Holy Spirit. Sunday School children launched "Happy Birthday balloons." Salem's diverse national backgrounds were celebrated. Those who could read another language read the Acts 2 lesson in numerous languages during the lessons on that day from the lectern. Some lectors wore national costumes appropriate to the language of their own backgrounds. Joyce Sunahara, Judy Gerlach and Sharon Green sewed 3x5 foot flags of over twenty nations that make up the Salem family. These flags are carried in the opening procession and then placed in stands all around the

altar steps. Ray Benskin made the flagpoles and wooden stands. Parishioners look forward each year to see who will carry in the flags. The celebration continues in Robison Hall with the singing of "Happy Birthday" and the serving of birthday cake and punch or coffee to everyone. It is a joyous occasion and makes more meaningful and real the first Pentecost.³¹

Additional changes that the committee members, choir director, organist and pastor made were in the Holy Week Services. The first one was the inclusion of foot washing in the Maundy Thursday Eucharist. Twelve lay people of all ages are selected to come to the steps of the altar where they remove a shoe and a sock and then the pastor and assistant take a pitcher and basin and symbolically wash one foot. The emphasis is on the servant role of a follower of Christ, especially for the minister. The second addition, was an early morning Eucharist on Easter. It is called the Easter Vigil and has parts of the liturgy adopted from the Greek Orthodox Easter Liturgy. The congregation assembles in the darkened sanctuary at 7:00 a.m. and the pastor comes in with the flame from the candle of Good Friday's "Tenebrae Service" and reads the account of the resurrection of Jesus Christ that first Easter morning, and then he, the Assistant, and the acolytes spread the light of this candle to the congregation who also have their candles lit. The theme for this Service and all Services on Easter is "Christ is Risen!" This ancient greeting is repeated many times. The Service also contains several baptisms and special music by the choirs and organist. Then those who are able continue this observance of the

³¹ Service Bulletin, 25 May 1980.

resurrection with a continental breakfast in Robison Hall.

Another addition happens on "All Saints' Sunday." This has always been observed in the parish as a commemoration of the Church Triumphant. It is a memorial day when the Church Militant remembers those who have passed on.

On November 1, 1981, the practice began in Salem that all the dead who passed away since the last All Saints' Day are remembered in thanksgiving at the time of the prayer of the church, with each of the deceased named and the bell tolled. This commemoration is helpful in the ministry of bereavement. The dead are not forgotten. The parish and church family still care. It is, along with the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, a reality check, a somber reminder of life's uncertainty and often shortness.

An interesting survey, "Our Parish---My Thinking and My Impressions" was distributed in March, 1982. This survey asked for the strengths and weaknesses of the parish; what needs were being met, and what important programs that Salem had or needed. The results were studied by the council and sent to various appropriate committees to help plan parish programs and improvements.³² The results helped to determine worship times on Sunday morning that were more favorable for the worshipers. It was also determined that two Sunday Services increase the total attendance figures for each Sunday. This is a concern of those members who regularly worship at the later Service. Many of them would prefer to have only one worship time on Sunday

³² The Tidings, March 1982.

mornings. They believe this would lead to more fellowship and concern for individual members. But the faithful members of the early Service want the opportunity to attend when it is more convenient for their often busy schedules. They do not often wish to attend regularly a Service at a later hour. It is too late they believe! So the council still defends the opportunity for two Services on most Sundays, except during the summer months or on special occasions such as Pentecost.

A Worship Smorgasbord

The 200th Anniversary of the Sunday School Movement was heralded on September 14, 1980. The Salem Sunday School presented a special drama in place of the usual sermon. The drama was entitled, "The Sunday School: Two Hundred Years of Caring," and it was written by John G. Hammond. The teachers, staff, and students were appropriately recognized for this aspect of ministry during the Service. Following this time, the Salem family gathered in Palm Park for a picnic with games, prizes and inspirational singing.³³

Martin Luther's 500th Anniversary of birth was especially remembered and studied in 1983. An original drama, "Luther and the Reformation" by Leena Lofstedt was presented at Salem by the Theatre Palisades in cooperation with the Federal Republic of Germany. The event was opened to the community and enjoyed by all attending.³⁴

³³ Service Bulletin, 4 Sept. 1980.

³⁴ The Tidings, Oct. 1985.

The Reverend J. Roger Anderson, Assistant to Bishop Stanley Olson, preached at both Services on November 6, 1983. (Pastor Rozen was attending the National Luther Observance in Washington, D.C..) This was the official Salem commemoration for the anniversary of the birth of the German reformer.³⁵

The Music Department conducted "Christmas Around the World" at the Services on Sunday, December 16, 1984. This was a celebration of the holy season through international carols and anthems played by the organist, Jerry Holmes; with participation by the Chancel, Youth, and Bells of Praise Choirs, conducted by Scott Leggett, choir director.³⁶

Johann Sebastian Bach's 300th birthday was remembered at Salem's Services on March 17, 1985 in recognition of this Lutheran composer and organist who had a great influence on the worship life of all Christendom. His compositions are played, admired, and popular to this day. The majority of the music at Salem's Services on that Sunday were written by this composer.³⁷

Salem's 40th anniversary was held on Sunday, April 20, 1986. It was an important event. "Life Begins at 40" was the unofficial theme. Bishop Olson preached; Pastor Roger Anderson, Pastor Robison and Pastor Rozen were the officiating clergy. Council President Warren Durkin and numerous other members each had a role in the Service. A wonderful banquet recognizing the

³⁵ Service Bulletin, 6 Nov. 1983.

³⁶ Service Bulletin, 16 Dec. 1984.

³⁷ Service Bulletin, 17 March 1985.

Charter Roll members was held at the Candlewood Country Club afterwards.³⁸

Salem Parish purchased with memorial funds a fine large television and video setup on a portable stand that was used as an audio visual tool in various worship occasions. Videos concerning Lutheran doctrine, Bible Stories, the Life of Christ, famous Christian witnesses and other appropriate topics have been used in the past few years. The informal discussions of the videos afterwards are usually led by Pastor Rozen.

Sunday, April 21, 1991, was the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the parish. The celebration had Bishop Miller of the Pacifica Synod of The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as the preacher, Pastor Rozen as the celebrant of the Eucharist, with Pastor Emeritus Robison, assisting. All of the choirs shared their musical talents. A beautiful reception that was attended by several hundreds of people followed. The forty-fifth anniversary Church Directory was distributed that day as well.³⁹

A new and unusual memorial gift for the sanctuary was dedicated on December 1, 1991. At the early Service, (the one at which Otto Henkel usually worshiped) a large, rugged, wooden cross with the hand carved figure of Christ crucified, was dedicated in loving memory of Otto Henkel. Mr. Henkel, along with his wife, Dorothy, were very active members of the parish. Mr. Henkel worked with wood and he was a fine carpenter by hobby. In fact, just a few weeks before he died, he made the wooden case for the Memorial Welcome

³⁸ Green interview.

³⁹ Service Bulletin, 16 July 1991.

Window in the office hallway.

The "Cross Committee," consisting of several lay people, the organist and the pastor, discussed the appropriate memorial for Mr. Henkel for months. Finally a decision was made to replace the brass, plastic, and wooden altar cross, with a large wooden crucifix. The decision was the result of remarks by Otto Henkel and Alice Zitzman to Pastor Rozen at one time when the three of them were looking at the altar area. Otto Henkel and Alice Zitzman shared their desire to have a crucifix above the altar. This was a common practice in many parts of Lutheran Europe.

The cross was commissioned from a professional woodcarver in Santa Fe, New Mexico, by Pastor Rozen. Seven months later it arrived at Salem. Six men had to carry the heavy cross into the sanctuary where it was going to be permanently displayed.

The "Cross Committee" took down the worn dossal curtain and hung the new cross above the marble altar. With the removal of the dossal curtain, the small stained glass windows that were previously almost hidden could now be seen and enjoyed by the congregation.

The effect was dramatic and humbling. Otto Henkel's memorial is a powerful witness and aid to the worship of Christ Jesus, our Savior, brother and friend. The new cross expresses warmth, love and forgiveness. David Golden, Assistant to the Pastor, sang "The Old Rugged Cross" at the dedication.

The selection and hanging of the new crucifix and the removal of the older altar cross and dossal curtain was a lesson in growth and change as well.

A new symbol, a different interpretation of the lordship of Christ, was approved by the committee and by the congregation.

Recently, other additions and experiments in worship times have taken place. On Sunday of Labor Day Weekend, 1992, a different type of observance of labor was used. Pastor Rozen asked three lay people in the parish family, two long time members and one friend of the parish, to share how they each serve God through their various occupations. The congregation greatly appreciated the three presentations given by a retired Whittier teacher, a business man and former Mayor of La Mirada, members of Salem, and a friend of the parish, a firefighter.⁴⁰

At the suggestion of Jerry Holmes, organist for ten years, the summers of 1992 and 1993 included an evening Holy Communion Service on the second Wednesday of each summer month. These Services attracted some members and friends of the parish who often had to work on Sundays. The Services were very informal, with no sung liturgy, no vestments, and no formal meditation time. There was much sharing and free discussion and prayers. The Services averaged 24 worshipers.⁴¹

Gwen Woloshun, Salem's most recent choir director, has initiated several unusual and fun worship experiences since joining the staff. She innovated the concept of an informal Men and Boys Choir to sing on Mothers' Day and a Women and Girls Choir to sing on Fathers' Day. The result was

⁴⁰ Service Bulletin, 6 Sept. 1992.

⁴¹ Tidings, July-August 1992.

greatly appreciated by the congregation.

Attitudes Towards Worship

Worship is important. No other program in the parish attracts as many participants as the Services of Divine Worship. Salem's people are a family. They come to Sunday Services to worship God, to ask for forgiveness, to receive absolution. They come to hear, study, and do God's Word. They come to celebrate the two sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. They come to this House of Prayer to receive God's peace, when so often, peace is hard to realize. They come to worship and they leave to serve their respective ministries. Worship binds the congregation to God and to each other. Salem's worship life demonstrates the unity, fellowship, and love that we have as part of God's creation. It is in worship where we gather strength, power, encouragement and direction for Salem's mission. Worship is Salem's food for the journey of the soul and body. Worship is where faith and service are stimulated and celebrated.

Iglesia Luterana?

The parish is ready for the opportunity to serve the changing neighborhood by developing a Spanish-speaking Lutheran ministry. The Pacifica Synod has designated Salem as one of the top ten parishes in its area in which to begin Spanish language Services. This comes as a result of a professional demographic survey conducted on behalf of the ELCA, Pacifica Synod. The results show that the congregation has to plan for changes and additions in the parish program to implement the recommendations that the

synod has for future ministry in this same geographical area. This should be no problem.

The reason this has not begun is because there is a lack of sufficient funding at the present time by the synod for this program. Salem Church is willing to provide the facilities and the utilities. But the salary for a Spanish-speaking pastor or lay preacher will have to come from the synod headquarters or the national church office.

The minister would be a catalyst in this situation and a counselor for this change. He would reassure the congregation that this situation is going to be okay and the congregation would not lose the church as they know it. The parish would be adding, extending their ministry. Many other parishes of various denominations in Southern California are in a similar program. Then a Spanish-speaking Lutheran Church, "Iglesia Luterana," can be developed. It is a time of soul searching and challenge. It is anticipated that Salem Church will support and accept these changes too.

Analysis

In the role of freeing people from their burdens, Salem Lutheran is dedicated to counseling, to bringing together people who are grateful to God for redemption and to providing a peaceful and aesthetical experience in worship.

Salem's worship experiences are a busy intersection in our common life. It is an intersection of everyday experiences, history, culture, tradition, thoughts and feelings. Here we believe that God can move human hearts to

believe and take hold of faith.

Through worship, hearing and studying the Scripture lessons, plus interaction of people, the story of God's redemption for His people is being proclaimed. No other social agency does this. This is the unique role and mission of the Christian Church throughout its history. This is the purpose of the Church. This is the role of Salem Parish--to serve the community around us as effective witnesses of God's presence in our world and to be faithful stewards of all creation. Salem is a community that confesses Christ, whose suffering love for the world it seeks to follow as it embodies and awaits with hope God's eschatological shalom. This story needs to be passed on.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ distinguishes the Church from other communities. The Christian Church is a community set apart by its confession in the Triune God and Jesus Christ as its Lord and Savior; a confession which affirms the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

The Gospel is the reason for ministry. The love of God made real in the life and mission of Jesus Christ is the center of the identity, mission and theology of the Christian Church, Salem included. This community is an inclusive community, for this is the nature of God.

Therefore the Church is not some abstract entity but a fellowship expressed concretely through local congregations; where the Word is proclaimed and celebrated and the sacraments administered. These local congregations, however, do not exist for themselves. Congregations, like Salem, find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church and the

universal Church exists in and through the congregation.

A great part of Salem's worship life takes place as a gathered community in public worship experiences. These are primarily held on Sunday mornings, but historically and even today, occur on different days and at different times as well.

To worship means to adore, to take time from our busy schedules to pause and reflect on God. Worship is one of the chief duties and services of being a Christian parish. Active parishes are committed to having worship times for their parishioners and visitors.

From its earliest days, Salem's pastors have taught and practiced that form is not foremost in worship. Rather content and intent matter most. Worship, as well, should not be stagnant in time. The worship times, too, should speak to the people, and let the people speak in turn.

Salem Church had modest beginnings. The services were biblical and simple. The congregation's public worship took place in rented facilities for several years. Those temporary quarters were inconvenient and they prohibited elaborate or more formal liturgies.

There are no surviving Sunday bulletins from the Gerberding pastorate. We can only surmise from his traditional and solid Lutheran background that the Common Service Book of the ULCA was the chief tool of congregational worship. Pastor Gerberding's vestments were a black Geneva-styled gown with a white collar. During this same pastorate the sacraments were infrequently celebrated.

On Ash Wednesday, March 6, 1946, following the traditional Lenten Vespers, the Charter Roll was officially signed. To the present time, a large proportion of Salem's active members still faithfully attend the traditional Wednesday Vespers of Lent. This is in direct contrast to numerous younger parishes who have poor response to this very Lutheran devotional experience.

When Pastor Robison arrived in 1946, changes took place. The first change was a new site for the temporary home of the congregation. Pastor Robison also gradually increased more liturgical observances and opportunities for worship. Robison introduced in 1947, not only the monthly newsletter, The Tidings, but the weekly printed Sunday bulletins. They proved to be a beneficial aid in the worship experiences. From 1947 to the present time, Salem has used printed bulletins. (These bulletins, as well as the parish newsletter, have been valuable resources in telling the saga of Salem Church.)

Church records show that Pastor Robison conducted four Holy Communion Services in 1948. He, too, used the black gown but eventually adopted the black cassock, white surplice, and stole, and more recently the alb and stole as the primary liturgical vestments. The parish has followed the trends and preferences of the national church in these areas.

As each building was being constructed and finished, there were the usual special liturgical services to celebrate these important events in the life of a congregation's ministry. These Services were usually well attended by synod dignitaries, special guests, and large congregations. They were especially happy events. Usually these worship experiences were followed by

special receptions, dinners or coffee hours. These gathering times have been expanded to include Christian fellowship and refreshments after Sunday morning services, which is also traditionally German and Scandinavian.

Other noteworthy experiences of the gathered parish were the 1967 Los Angeles Sports Arena's 450th Anniversary of the Reformation celebration, Salem's 1976 United States Bicentennial Service on July 4, the BEM Ecumenical Ministry Service that Salem hosted for the Whittier community in 1984, and the 1992 Labor Day Sunday Service with three lay people sharing their daily Christian witness within their occupations.

Also to be remembered, Salem has always celebrated with their pastors by special observances marking the beginning and conclusion of pastorates. The parish has consistently remembered the major birthdays and ordination anniversaries of their shepherds. These are seen as special religious and social celebrations.

Congregational members still recall the worship experiences in the first sanctuary which was dedicated in 1948. These recollections share the good feeling of familiarity and intimacy that took place in that first building. The services were crowded with all age groups, the children were many and noisy, and the aroma of Christmas Eve Services with candles and pine greens is still remembered.

When the present sanctuary was built in 1960 the feeling of intimacy was replaced with a sense of spaciousness, newness, and comfortableness. The seating arrangements were much more accommodating to the parishioners.

The marble chancel furniture, the pew kneelers, the communion rail and stained glass windows added to the spiritual ambiance. Intimacy was replaced by modernity and formality. The new sanctuary was in some ways a bit colder, but certainly more accessible and conducive to more varied liturgical observances with massed choirs and instruments.

The desire for more frequent Services of Holy Communion were enacted upon in 1965. Communion then began being celebrated on the first Sunday of each month, alternating with the first and second Services, and on special holy days.

Early during Pastor Rozen's leadership the Salem Council revised this schedule even more to include Holy Communion celebrations at all Services on the first and third Sundays of the month and all major festival days. This, today, is the practice of many Lutheran churches nationally. (There is the possibility of beginning the celebration of Holy Communion on each Sunday at least during one of the Services. The verdict is still out on this idea.)

With the addition of an assistant pastor in 1971, other changes occurred. Pastor Rozen introduced the wearing of the chasuble during the Holy Communion Services. Other changes during his long pastorate have included the introduction of Contemporary Folk Services, informal Summer Communion Services, the presence of lay assistants at most Services, lay lectors, monthly children's sermons, taped audio cassettes of the Sunday liturgy for use by shut-ins, the introduction of the imposition of ashes, the Maundy Thursday foot washing ceremony, and the Easter Vigil with baptisms, Holy Communion, and

the blessing of the Easter fire, after the Eastern Orthodox tradition. These changes have been accepted and have become very much a part of Salem's worship life and traditions.

Rozen very much believes that Salem's worship times should be ethereal and sensorial. The worship experiences should appeal to the senses of seeing, hearing, tasting and smelling. And these ideas are celebrated through the Liturgical Year with appropriate Services. This can be understood through the use of palms, ashes, poinsettias, Easter lilies, Christmas greens and wreaths, candles, banners, flags, and Pentecost balloons, in addition to the use of the traditional paraments and vestments. Salem uses the traditions of a wide spectrum of Christ's diverse church. Yet the parish is traditional Lutheran in its main emphasis of worship experiences. These worship celebrations give Salem a sense of its identity by establishing traditions, roots and still advocating and using freedom of liturgical expressions. All of these ideas are incorporated to make for variety and interest.

Various choirs have existed during the history of the parish. In 1957 there were five large vocal choirs. At present there are the Chancel, Youth, Sunday School and Bells of Praise choirs which enhance the worship life of the parish and also provide fellowship. There have been many choir directors, and the majority of them have not held membership in Salem.

All of Salem's organists, however, have come from the parish membership. There have been at least six paid organists during Salem's history. Doris Robison and Jerry Holmes, the present organist, have served

the longest.

Pastor Rozen has tried to make Salem's worship times periods of global awareness and concerns. But whether the congregation inwardly understands this or is concerned by these issues cannot be measured.

The Memorial Committee has greatly enhanced Salem's worship life through its history. In the previous sanctuary, the present sanctuary, Sunday School rooms and Robison Hall, many fine memorials have been purchased and dedicated for parish use. These include religious education materials, Bibles, Service Books, paraments, vestments, altar ware, sacramental vessels, the church bell, English handbells, crucifix, organ, pianos and stained glass windows.

In the past decade more funerals have taken place in Salem's sanctuary. Previously, mortuaries were the more common location for funerals. But Pastors Robison and Rozen believe the proper place for the funeral of an active church member is in the sanctuary. Funerals, too, are opportunities for the congregation to worship and celebrate.

Worship does not only take place in Salem's sanctuary. There is worship, more informally, in Sunday School, during various group and auxiliary meetings, on youth and young adult retreats. Worship takes place in the visitation times with shut-ins and the hospitalized. There is worship in the private and family devotions of the members of the parish each day in their own surroundings. These include grace before meals, and morning and evening prayers. All of these are encouraged by the parish leaders, Salem Council,

pastor and staff.

More recent additions to the worship life have included large screen video series, chancel dramas, youth dramas, Youth Sundays, informal hymn sings several times during the year, Cursillo-inspired devotions and hymns, and Pastor Rozen's "chalk talks," which are informal question and answer sessions in the nave of the sanctuary, away from the pulpit and in the midst of the congregation. But to the author's knowledge, there have never been liturgical dance experiences at Salem. These dance interpretations would make interesting variation and a new experience for many in the congregation.

In the past two years, Salem's buildings have heard the praises of God's people in English and Spanish in joint ecumenical celebrations with the Church of God, Seventh Day. The future will probably see more Spanish language worship opportunities for the changing neighborhood.

Variations exist in world-wide Lutheran worship. It is standard practice that not all parishes worship exactly in the same manner. This is permissible according to Lutheran theology. There has always been latitude in matters of practice and style. This is called *adiaphora*. It is typically Lutheran to have variety in non-essential worship practices and customs such as vestments, paraments, or the role of choirs.

Changes in worship styles have occurred in Salem's past and will occur again in the future. However, there have been no changes in substance. The substance proclaims the same Gospel the Church has preached for almost 2,000 years of mission history.

Salem Parish went from meeting in rented quarters with piano and portable altar to its own sanctuary complete with organ and all types of liturgical appointments. The congregation has gone from no formal liturgical book, to three successive official hymnals, and is presently studying other alternative worship resources and contemporary Christian music copyright requirements.

There is no objection on the part of Salem's people to have included with the more traditional organ, piano and brass instruments, the contemporary practice of guitars, synthesizer, and other instruments during worship. All of these can be valid expressions of praise to God. They, too, are adiaphora.

Salem Church has not changed things for the sake of change. The parish's philosophy throughout its history could best be described in the adage, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

This congregation is a traditional Lutheran parish with a permanent building dedicated for the worship of God. Salem does not wish to lose this identity. The congregation is not going to become a generic, non-denominational entity that worships in an industrial park warehouse (i.e. Calvary Chapel). Nor is Salem the Crystal Cathedral located in nearby Garden Grove.

Salem finds itself within the television ministry of a number of Protestant evangelists. While this is an alternative, it is no substitute for personal, local Christian contact, nor by remaining at home to worship does this promote volunteerism. This issue of church attendance is of major concern to Salem's

Council, the Worship and Music Committee and the pastor.

Salem presently appears like an older established congregation; it may not meet the needs of a younger and more contemporary age group. Since Lutheranism has always changed with its worshipers through the years, it remains unknown as to whether or not this congregation will retain its present form of worship or will adjust this aspect of its life to the rapidly changing demographics.

The intention is to remain open and flexible. In order to achieve this constant revision, congregational participation of trial forms of worship need to occur. Whether Salem will find the future forms of worship through a guitar mass or through electrical media will be determined by the age and openness of its present members.

Lutherans in America have been effective at customizing their liturgical style to people who remember their European language and cultural roots. But Lutherans in America are no longer only Germans and Scandinavians. The original congregations are changing and losing their ethnicity. This is partly because of later-generation distance from the formative culture. It is also the result of mobility and general cultural changes that have taken their toll on the established close-knit communities that responded to traditional Lutheran worship styles.

However, Salem needs to respond to its changing neighborhood. The neighborhood is not predominately church-going any longer. Most local residents are either non-active Christians or they know very little about Jesus

Christ. Many have not walked from earliest childhood with Him. Words and acts of traditional Lutheranism do not gain their attention.

Church life cannot just look backward. A well-known Lutheran belief is that present day worship is a "foretaste of the feast to come."

Salem Lutheran Church should not lose the anticipation of more to come; it has not discovered everything that is important in the area of worship. The Salem Council, Worship and Music Committee, and pastor should remain excited and open for new worship possibilities.

What can the parish learn from other churches that are growing? What can Salem change? There is a thin line between what suggestions and changes the parish can adopt for outreach style and the necessary protection of unchangeable theological doctrine. This will remain an important subject of much discussion and study.

Throughout forty-eight years, Salem has preached, shared, proclaimed and celebrated the Good News of Jesus Christ. The congregation has been faithful, innovative, experimental and traditional in its liturgical observances of the Church Year. It has, as well, been faithful to its historical Lutheran roots. At the same time, it is not afraid to try something new if it is in good taste and Christ-centered. Salem has not been closed-minded, even though it is an older congregation with firmly established values. This can be seen in all of the changes that have taken place in the format of worship since its organization.

Salem's goals for the future include even more active involvement by the congregation, and opportunities for alternative worship experiences, music,

instruments, and meditation periods.

Worship will remain a time to adore and serve God. Salem's worship will continue to free people from their burdens. Salem Church will keep on providing peaceful and aesthetical worship experiences.

CHAPTER 6

Ecumenical Awareness

Never A Loner

Salem Lutheran Church began as a mission congregation of the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) in 1946. There was one other Lutheran Church in the city at that time. Trinity Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, was located in the Uptown area. (By 1993 Whittier would be home to six Lutheran parishes, three Evangelical Lutheran Church in America congregations and three Missouri Synod congregations.)

From the time of the Reverend Paul J. Gerberding's beginning pastorate (1945-1946), Salem congregation has taken part in ecumenical activities. The first inter-denominational involvement was Salem's participation in the Union Service on Thanksgiving. This has been held each year in one of the larger sanctuaries of the Uptown area. Salem played a supportive role in this until the parish decided to have its own Thanksgiving Service when the second sanctuary was constructed.¹

The young congregation sent lay representatives along with the pastor to synodical meetings in local districts, conferences and the state areas. The parish had close synodical ties to the three Lutheran bodies of which it held membership over its forty-eight year existence. The synodical Presidents, Bishops, other officers, and boards have had amicable ties with the parish

¹ Council Minutes, 5 Nov. 1945.

through the years, and they have encouraged Salem's ecumenical involvement in many areas. Salem's two pastors after Pastor Gerberding, David E. Robison and Lee B. Rozen, have encouraged the congregations to be active in inter-Lutheran and non-Lutheran contacts with various Christian communities, and even the local Jewish synagogue.

Salem Church and its pastors have been involved in the Whittier Ministerial Association and have participated in its city-wide religious preference surveys throughout the years. Key 73, the national wide evangelism drive in 1973, was a typical example. Salem sent out thirty-five callers to various neighborhoods in the city.

The Women's Missionary Society, under the leadership of Mrs. Daisy Gerberding, became active in ecumenical affairs as soon as the congregation was organized. This group would eventually become Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (WELCA) and continue to be very active in synodical organizations, the Council of Churches, Church Women United, and other benevolent agencies.²

Synodical Ties

Salem Church relied on the Board of American Missions for the first years of its existence. This ULCA agency supported the pastors, Gerberding and Robison, who were considered to be missionaries. They paid Pastor Robison's salary until the congregation could assume this responsibility. The same board granted loans to the congregation to obtain a parsonage, land for

² "Dedication Booklet," 1961.

the church site, and the first building on the Glengarry Avenue site.³

When the congregation was still in its infancy, without any property of its own, benevolence offerings were sent to the ULCA California Synod, which in turn, after local needs were met, sent monies to the church headquarters for national and international Christian work.

Typical of the parish's synodical assistance throughout its history can be explained in this thank-you note sent to the congregation by Bishop Olson in 1984:

Dear Pastor and People:

The most significant source of funds for the mission of our Synod is the offering that is faithfully given Sunday after Sunday by countless members of the congregations of the Pacific Southwest Synod and marked for "benevolence." Fifty-six cents of every benevolence dollar received by the Synod is given to the Lutheran Church in America for use in ministry through the church wide agencies.

Of the forty-four cents of each benevolence dollar retained by the Synod, eighteen cents is shared through grants to the institutions and agencies on the territory of our Synod; twenty-six cents is used for shepherding and administrative cost of operating as a Synod. . . .

. . . your congregation has performed ministry in the name of Christ---locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. You have ministered through your congregation. . . your Synod. . . through church-wide agencies. . . .

Your congregation has met their goal one-hundred percent in 1984! You have demonstrated that benevolence is not something above your congregation's mission but that it is a significant part

³ "Dedication Booklet," 1961.

of your ministry as the People of God.⁴

Four examples of shared work and concentration by Salem are the support of Camp Yolijsa in the San Bernardino mountains, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, and the Home for the Aged at Alhambra. Salem Parish was in on the very beginnings of these four Lutheran institutions.

Camp Yolijsa (old and new campsite) was used by the youth and pastor of the parish. Many of the older Salem youth were also counselors with Pastor Robison during the summer periods. Pastor Robison also served on the Camp Yolijsa Board. In 1955 Salem committed to raising \$2,350 for its share of the new camp location at Oak Glen. Members of the parish were at the dedication of the new facilities on June 30, 1957.⁵

In the past decade the parish often rented a bus to take 40 or 50 youth and adults to spend a day at the camp for its annual Apple Day in early October. Salem, too, has participated in various synod, youth and women's retreats at the camp. Recently the women of the parish enjoyed a weekend in the new Luther Glen Retreat Center located on the edge of the camp.

Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, was founded in 1953. Salem Parish was one of the supporting founding churches of this institution. The seminary recently sent a thank you certificate of its appreciation to all of the founding parishes. Pastor Robison also served on the board at the

⁴ Tidings, March 1985.

⁵ Service Bulletin, 30 June 1957.

seminary and was instrumental in interviewing both of Salem's Assistant Pastors, Richard Spaulding and Lee Rozen, and the two interns, John Wetzel and Bob Mizerak, who served the parish. All four of these seminarians attended Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary.⁶

First Lutheran Church, Glendale, was the location on November 3, 1957, for a Service of Installation for the President and Board of Governors of the recently formed California Lutheran Education Foundation. This organization was the beginning of the establishment of a Lutheran College in Southern California. Dr. Orville Dahl, President, was to be the chief instrument in developing the program for this institution. Members of the congregation attended this Service and the dedication of the Centrum buildings of California Lutheran College on Sunday, November 11, 1962, at Thousand Oaks.⁷

Salem Lutheran Church would become very much involved in the development and support of this institution. Many young people attended and graduated from this college. Pastor Rozen, an alumnus, has given great support by encouraging college bound young people to visit the campus and to enroll as students. The congregation has also granted several scholarships to parish members who have attended this school. Pastor Rozen has also actively supported the annual Scandinavian Day celebrated in early May. He has been awarded a Fellows of CLU plaque and is helping to establish a Scandinavian-American museum and an art gallery on campus. (California

⁶ David Robison, interview.

⁷ Service Bulletin, 4 Nov. 1962.

Lutheran College is now named California Lutheran University.)

On numerous occasions during Pastor Rozen's tenure at Salem, guests from California Lutheran University including Dr. Jerald Slattum, Professor of Art, have been to the parish to speak on behalf of church/university relations.⁸

The Home for the Aged at Alhambra was dedicated on December 28, 1947. Salem committed itself to prayerfully, financially, and physically help in the establishment of this needed institution for the aged. Salem's people gave of their time, talents, labor and offerings to this home. Men from the parish often joined volunteer work parties at the Alhambra location. Salem's women have often sent visitation teams and work teams to the senior citizen's establishment. Special Christmas and birthday gifts are delivered to the residents.

This one Southern California senior citizen facility has been expanded through growth and Lutheran mergers to include several locations. They are all called California Lutheran Homes.⁹

Another important mission opportunity for Salem Parish starting early in its history and strengthened in the last two decades has been the Navajo Lutheran Mission at Rock Point, Arizona. In early years the parish sent warm clothing, educational materials, toys and money for this mission to the Native Americans in the Four Corners area.

In the 1970s Salem's Young Adults began taking vacation time to drive to the mission. They always carried supplies to be donated to the mission

⁸ Service Bulletin, 24 April 1983.

⁹ Service Bulletin, 28 Dec. 1947.

school and clinic. Good ties were made there with the missionary staff and some of the Navajo Lutherans. Salem's Vacation Bible School, in recent years, has collected money, infant clothing, craft material, first aid items and toiletries for the people at Rock Point. Several Salem families, as well as the Daughters of the Spirit (DOTS), have "adopted" Navajo children to help finance their education at the mission school.

Mrs. Fern Cole, retired missionary to Rock Point, has visited Salem several times in the past three years to share about the work and the needs of this Navajo mission, which she served with her husband, Pastor Wally Cole. Salem rejoices in her work of translating several books of the New Testament into Navajo.¹⁰

Local Lutheran Ties

Salem has close ties with other Lutheran Churches in the area. These were made stronger with Salem's congregational decision to leave the Los Angeles area region of the new Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and to join with the two other Whittier ELCA parishes in the Pacifica Synod of Southern California in 1987. These two parishes are Shepherd of the Hills and St. Andrew.

This parish decision was also a time of change and new loyalty. Salem Parish had always been oriented towards the Los Angeles area. The majority of Synod Conventions and meetings were held there. Salem's people took part (and still do) in several synodical sponsored programs in that city. Pastor

¹⁰ Service Bulletin, Oct. 13, 1991.

Rozen and the newly-elected Southern California (West) Synod's Bishop, J. Roger Anderson, are close friends. Strong bonds exist between Los Angeles synod headquarters and Salem, Whittier. However, the other two new ELCA parishes did not have as strong ties. Much of their work was oriented toward the Orange County area and parishes. Salem Parish thought it best not to divide the city into two different geographical synods, one whose headquarters is in Los Angeles, and the other whose headquarters is in Yorba Linda, in Orange County. So for the sake of city unity and the need to develop a more inclusive city ministry, Salem voted to join the Pacifica Synod. (Several other parishes that were along the Los Angeles-Orange County border have also voted to become a part of the Pacifica Synod.) Close ties, support, and love are still shared by the congregation and pastor for the Southern California (West) Synod and its bishop, clergy and parishes.

Following the election of Pacifica Synod Bishop Robert Miller, the three parishes invited him to preach at his first official episcopal event, a joint Thanksgiving Eve Service in the Salem sanctuary. This joyous event included the congregations, choirs and pastors of the three parishes. The Salem Council hosted a reception in Robison Hall afterward.¹¹

These three parishes have closer ties now through the various women's meetings, pastors' pericope studies, and occasional joint worship experiences. Salem would have even more frequent contact with the other two Whittier parishes if the parishes were closer geographically.

¹¹ Service Bulletin, 25 Nov. 1987.

Following his resignation from Salem, Pastor Paul J. Gerberding went with his wife, Daisy, to Pomona, California. There they organized Trinity Lutheran Church on May 25, 1947. Salem parish was represented on that day. While in Pomona or in another nearby mission location, the Gerberdings were often invited to participate in the Services of ground-breaking, cornerstone laying or dedication of various structures at Salem.

When Lee Rozen was called to Salem as Assistant Pastor, Pastor Robison took part in his Ordination Service at Trinity Lutheran Church, Pomona. This happened to be Pastor Rozen's home congregation. During the Ordination Service, Pastor Robison remarked to the gathered congregation that "Salem, Whittier, had sent to Trinity Church, Pomona, its first Pastor, Paul Gerberding; now, Trinity Church, Pomona, was sending her first ministerial son, Pastor Lee Rozen, to Salem Church, Whittier.

Local Non-Lutheran Ties

Whittier Presbyterian Church, Salem's closest neighbor, has had shared youth programs and Released Time classes together. In the last two decades, the two parishes have often shared in Thanksgiving Services, Reformation observances, and Lenten Services and study programs. There have been shared dinners, meetings, and neighborhood involvement programs. The pastors of the two churches have close ties and mutual respect.

On Ash Wednesday, February 18, 1979, the congregations and pastors met together at Salem for the beginning of six weekly Lenten dinners and ecumenical dialogs. The choirs of both churches took part. That night saw the

first observance in either parish of the Imposition of Ashes. (This was optional for all attending.) This devotional act was part of the new Lutheran Book of Worship liturgies. The majority of the congregation participated in this act and were deeply moved by the reinstating of this new, old custom.

Pastor Rozen's printed welcome that evening read:

Tonight we gather in Christ's Name as His children. We come as inheritors of two great and historic confessions of Christ's Church, the Reformed and the Lutheran.

It is in the spirit of heirs of Christ, and His Gospel, that we come together for this historic celebration of the Holy Communion. We welcome you all to Salem Church, not as Lutherans and Presbyterians, as much as friends; growing, sharing, and walking with God as our mutual Father, Christ as our Brother and Savior; and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter and Guide.¹²

Pew Exchange Sunday was observed in Whittier for several years. In 1982, twenty-three churches, Protestant and Catholic, took part with Salem's people in this ecumenical congregational visiting. Church members were urged to attend another parish's Services. This was to help break down stereotypes and "old wives' tales."¹³

The Salem Young Adults in the 1960s visited St. Mary's Catholic Church or other Catholic churches in the city out of curiosity and a glance at their traditions and practices, but there was not much ecumenical interaction.

By attendance at the Whittier Ministerial Association lunches, Father Peterson of St. Mary's and Pastor Rozen developed a friendship. They shared

¹² Service Bulletin, 18 Feb.1979.

¹³ Service Bulletin, 2 May 1982.

meals and discussions together at the rectory and at Pastor Rozen's home.

The pastors agreed to have their congregations participate in an adult study group that would discuss the Augsburg Confession. The 450th Anniversary of this confession was observed in 1980. The group met in the home of Mrs. Caryle Steves, Salem member, and they studied and shared meals together. A joint family picnic was held in Palm Park on June 22, 1980. The two congregations worshiped with thirty other Catholic and Lutheran congregations at St. Vibiana's Catholic Cathedral in Los Angeles to mark the close of the Augsburg study. Father Peterson and members of St. Mary's Catholic Church also took part in Salem's Reformation Sunday Service. The title of the bulletin for that day read, "Reformation/Reconciliation Sunday."

In 1993 St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church celebrated its one-hundredth anniversary with a special mass that included former pastors of the parish and special guests, including Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles. Many congregations in Whittier were invited to send representatives to this festive event. The Rev. Shirley Rose of St. Matthias Episcopal Church, Pastor Rozen, and Salem's Council President, Colonel Clyde Sedgwick, were the only official guests that responded. They were delighted to attend and to enjoy a reception afterwards to greet the parish members and the cardinal. Ties with this parish remain cordial.

Pastors Robison and Rozen have often attended Jewish/Christian symposiums at Temple Beth Israel in Whittier. Salem's people, through adult study groups or youth groups, have attended Services at the synagogue. The

congregations have worked together in housing and feeding the homeless in the Whittier area.

Gerberding Hall was the scene of the ecumenical Christian Released Time program for many years. Public school children of Protestant backgrounds were taken to Salem Church each Friday morning for religious education. The program reached its highest attendance of 400 youngsters, 4th, 5th, and 6th graders, at Salem each week in 1954.

The Whittier Council of Weekday Christian Education (Released Time) disbanded by the summer of 1976. This was after thirty years of fruitful and faithful ministry to the school children of Whittier. There were not enough interested individuals or churches to carry on the financial or the teaching staff for this ministry. Pastor Robison, the last President of the Board, said, "Nothing good that we do in the Lord's name can ever be considered as wasted or lost. Thousands of God's children have been introduced to, or helped to grow in faith in Christ . . . we are glad to have had a part in it."¹⁴

International Awareness

Salem has had many guest speakers in the pulpit and at church sponsored meetings. They have come from all denominations and backgrounds and have included both the ordained and non-ordained.

For example, in one week in 1967, two guest speakers visited the congregation. At two Sunday Services, was the Reverend William Wallner, a converted Polish Jew and a Lutheran pastor who lived in Los Angeles, spoke.

¹⁴ Council Minutes, May 1976.

He served the National Lutheran Council for many years with a mission to the Jews. Before World War II, he was pastor of a large congregation in Warsaw, Poland. He also headed the chaplaincy work in the Polish Army. Pastor Wallner was fluent in several languages. He spoke of the different ministries in Europe and the United States in which he was active. The next day, at the Lutheran Church Men's Meeting, the Reverend Ais Pormes, Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Djakarta, Indonesia, spoke. He was the chaplain of the rebel forces that opposed President Sakarno in 1958, and he was Chair of the Christian Labor Group through which the communist government was overthrown.¹⁵

Salem, a post World War II parish, was always aware of the international role of the United States. In those formative years, so many parishioners were veterans or had family members who fought in the war. The church was asked to contribute monetary aid for the needy of the German city of Freiburg, a city adopted by the city of Whittier after the war. This fund raiser was headed by Whittier's Freiburg Committee. One Great Hour of Sharing appeals were also made to help on behalf of war-sufferers in Europe. Especially effective was a twenty-four hour radio appeal heard over 1,092 stations throughout the United States. Answer for Anne, a Lutheran World Action Film about displaced persons, many of them Lutheran refugees, was shown in the church sanctuary in 1949. There was great support from the congregation to sponsor refugees

¹⁵ Service Bulletin, 15 Jan. 1967.

from Europe following this special film.¹⁶

Stefanie Czys of Poland in October, 1956, was welcomed into the home of Salem members Ed and Millie Schultz. Miss Czys was a displaced person who fled her Communist-dominated homeland. The Salem Luther League (92 strong) helped her establish residence in the United States.¹⁷

The Salem Church Council took on the duties of sponsoring the family of Mrs. Trinh Nhuong Thi in 1975. This Vietnamese lady was a widow with children 15 to 28 years of age living at Camp Pendelton, California. The congregation helped them with housing, furniture, clothing, food and temporary employment until they became self-sufficient. The family was Buddhist. The father was an American ally who was killed in an automobile accident in the Philippines.¹⁸

In 1983, Salem Church was asked by the Lutheran Immigration Services to help sponsor a refugee family from Poland. This family was ordered out of the nation by the Communist leaders for its role in the Solidarity Movement. With the help of Hal Johnsen, Aid Association for Lutherans representative in Whittier, the Salem congregation along with St. Mary's Catholic Church, helped sponsor the Leszek Witelus family. Many of Salem's people provided clothing, furniture, food, and an apartment for this Roman Catholic family. St. Mary's parish did not follow through very well on this venture, despite the

¹⁶ Service Bulletin, 20 Feb. 1949

¹⁷ Service Bulletin, 14 Oct. 1956.

¹⁸ Service Bulletin, 7 Sept. 1975.

family's active Roman Catholic beliefs. The three member family learned English and found employment. The family often attended worship at Salem and the parish maintained contact with them until they returned to a free Poland.¹⁹

Interchurch Counseling Center

Pastor Robison and Chuck Vincent of the Social Ministry Committee were instrumental in the formation, with seven other churches in Whittier, of the Interchurch Counseling Center (ICC). Dr. Ray Akin was the director. Salem Church used \$500 from its Christian Service Fund to help begin this new, ecumenical counseling venture. The Center is Christian based and continues to operate in the city under the direction of Kathleen Fitzpatrick. David Dickerson, an active Salem parishioner, has long been a member of the ICC board and served as its 1993-1994 President. Pastor Rozen has also served on this board, as well as several lay people from the parish.²⁰

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry

A very important and historic study took place in Whittier beginning in June, 1984. This ecumenical study was conducted by several parishes in the city. Salem was an active participant for all of the sessions. The study focused on the World Council of Churches' document, Baptism, Eucharist and

¹⁹ Tidings, Oct. 1983.

²⁰ Service Bulletin, 5 Oct. 1975.

Ministry.²¹ The study was divided into the three respective topics, with study and celebration of the common qualities and theology of various Christian denominations. The three-part study was very interesting and thought-provoking for the Salem members who participated.

The first study event took place at the First Baptist Church in the Uptown area of Whittier. The purpose of the study and celebration was to "affirm the common understanding of Baptism as the Rite of Christian Initiation, explore differences of interpretation and practice, and celebrate our unity in Christ in an Ecumenical Service of Baptism."²²

Dr. Paul Crowe, President of the Council on Church Unity, Disciples of Christ (Christian Church), Indianapolis, Indiana, was the main speaker. His remarks on baptism were followed by an Ecumenical Service of Baptism using immersion, pouring and sprinkling. A dinner and benediction followed. The sponsoring parishes of Whittier were Salem Lutheran, First Christian, First United Methodist, Whittier Presbyterian, East Whittier Christian, First Baptist, St. Mary's Catholic, Hillcrest Congregational, East Whittier Methodist and St. Matthias Episcopal.²³

The second part of the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry study was reviewed and celebrated at the Whittier Presbyterian Church on Sunday

²¹ World Council of Churches, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Geneva: WCC, 1982).

²² Tidings, June 1984.

²³ Tidings, Sept. 1984.

afternoon, September 30, 1984. Twelve churches, including Salem, participated. The guest speaker was Dr. Jane Dempsey Douglass, who was then professor of church history at the School of Theology at Claremont. She was then chairperson of current ecumenical conversations between the Presbyterians and Lutherans.

Following her speech, an unusual Agape love feast used by the early Church was held. The meal was bread, wine, cheese, olives, honey and fruit. This meal was in substitution for those denominations theologically unable to participate in a Eucharist at that time.²⁴

The third study of Baptism Eucharist and Ministry was held at East Whittier United Methodist Church, on April 28, 1985. There was a lunch and a panel of speakers. The moderator was Miriam Stump. The panel presented the meaning and significance of apostolic succession as understood by the major traditions of Orthodox, Catholic, Reformed and other denominations. The speakers that day were from the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, United Methodist and Disciples of Christ Churches.²⁵

The largest ecumenical event in Whittier that year and any year since took place at Salem Church on Sunday, June 2, 1985. This event was the culmination of intense study, discussions, dinners and special Services with many denominations participating in the ecumenical document produced by the World Council of Churches: Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. The last

²⁴ Tidings, Sept. 1984.

²⁵ Service Bulletin, 21 April 1985.

meeting focused on the ministry of the laity in the churches. The "Feast of Life" Eucharist witnessed to the common ministry of the Christian people, lay and ordained. There were four workshops: "New Ventures in Lay Ministry" with Ann Hayman (Presbyterian Church) speaking on her ministry to prostitutes in Los Angeles at the Mary Magdalene House, and Edith Haynes (First Friends Church) speaking on prison ministry; "Lay Eucharistic Ministry" with representatives from First Christian Church and St. Mary's Catholic Church; "Video Ministry in the Church" with Marilee Embree of the United Methodist Church; and "Renewed Orders of Ministry," with Dr. James Fitzgerald, Permanent Deacon of St. Mary's Catholic Church.²⁶

Salem's Lutheran Church Women hosted a fine banquet following the workshops. At the banquet's conclusion an ecumenical Holy Communion Service was celebrated. There were selections by the ecumenical choir, a dialog sermon by Father Tom Wilburs of the Catholic Church and Pastor Sally Welch of the Disciples of Christ Church. Pastor Rozen's thoughts on that significant evening were shared with his congregation:

The major highlight for our parish was hosting the June 2, "Feast of Life" ministry workshop, banquet, and Holy Communion celebration. At this Service were: Lutherans, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Quakers, Episcopalians, United Methodists, Disciples of Christ, Congregationalists, and others, participating in prayer, praise, foot washing and the Eucharist. Do you realize what was really accomplished that day right here at Salem, for so much of the Divided Church? History was made!!! The Holy Spirit was very much present during the entire time. And our parish was involved with this important mission and evangelistic outreach for the past two years.

²⁶ Tidings, June 1985.

The Lutheran Cursillo Movement

The Cursillo Movement began among lay people in the Roman Catholic Church in Spain. It has spread to many nations and several denominations, including the Lutheran Churches.

Pastor Rozen, Salem organist, Jerry Holmes and his wife, Gina Holmes were the first Southern California Lutheran Cursillo “pilgrims” from Salem. They attended separate Men’s and Women’s Retreats at a nearby rented Roman Catholic Retreat Center for their weekends, with Lutherans of different synods participating in various ordained and non-ordained ministries. They experienced a tremendous spiritual uplifting and recommitment to Christ. Their enthusiasm and word of mouth endorsements have encouraged Salem to send over twenty participants in the last year and a half to these quarterly weekend retreats. (The retreats are very popular and reservations months ahead are normal.) Those parishioners who have attended have become more active in Salem parish and often have taken on leadership roles for various committees and church programs. It has been a tremendous blessing to all concerned.²⁷

Sharing With Another Congregation

Early on in Salem’s history, after the first sanctuary was constructed, a small Seventh Day Adventist congregation rented part of the facilities for a brief time before constructing their own building. In 1992 a Spanish-speaking congregation, The Church of God, Seventh-Day, began to meet in the parish hall of Salem. They are a small group and pay a modest rental fee each month.

²⁷ Annual Report, 1992.

Salem does not know just how long this arrangement will last, but the parish welcomes the opportunity to serve the neighborhood and to extend ecumenical ties.

Salem Lutheran Church hopes to extend the use of the facilities and the mission program by asking the Pacifica Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to begin a Spanish-speaking Lutheran mission to West Whittier. Salem has a fine church plant and desires to share its building with the increasing number of Spanish-speaking residents nearby. Perhaps by the time Salem is 50 years old in 1996, in this same location, history will repeat itself, a new congregation, a part of Salem Church, will be born.

Analysis

Theologically, Salem parish attempts to bring the Holy Scriptures to the people of God, to show the parishioners that they are saved by the grace of God, through one faith, one baptism, and one Lord. While we have no way of measuring this, it is assumed that the people are aware of this and they accept it. The church teaches that humans may directly contact their God, who is a God of love, without a mediator. Therefore, historically, Salem has consistently concentrated on praying and prayer groups. Believing in the priesthood of all believers, the entire parish strives to become ministers who compassionately derive strengthened faith by helping others.

Salem Church tells the Gospel, the story of Jesus, with its significance for our modern world. Salem Church differs from the Red Cross, other altruistic organizations such as Rotary, the Elks Club, etc. and hospitals by offering the

forgiveness of sin through the life and death of Jesus Christ. The participants are free from the guilt and punishment of sin.

Salem Parish does not exist by itself. It never did. From its very beginnings it was nurtured by the mother church, the ULCA. Salem has not been absorbed in its own interests. The past has taught the parish to support and be active in many ecumenical and benevolent ministries, nationally and internationally. There is no evidence that this time-honored practice will change in the future.

Salem is not just buildings. The congregation was formed and began active ministry without having its own buildings for a number of years. The parish is not only a geographical entity. The people of Salem do not just live within a defined two-mile radius of the church buildings. Today they live, work and serve far beyond the immediate neighborhood as opposed to the earlier congregation. This distance affects membership and membership activities. Simply stated, many of the older members do not have cars and must rely on the church van or other people to provide transportation. The parish is made up of men, women and children who believe that Jesus Christ is their Savior and the Lord of their lives. Within this group of believers the Gospel of Christ is shared, preached, studied and empowered. Here, too, the holy sacraments are celebrated. The believers are united by their ties with other organizations and today they represent the Whittier Ministerial Association, Interchurch Counseling Center, Pacifica Synod, ELCA national and international work, Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, and the World Council of

Churches.

Ministry is not confined to the church buildings. Hopefully it is lived out in the activities of the parishioners' daily lives. The Church is where the members are; most of the time the Church is at the work place, the market place, school, home and in the community. The Church is people gathered and scattered. The parish gathers for worship, study and sharing. The parish scatters to have each member do their particular ministry in everyday life wherever they may be found. That is the rhythm of an active modern-day parish such as Salem. Although an older congregation, Salem is not petrified. Salem Parish is at work through all the occupations of its members. The members of Salem have served in the Peace Corps and state and local government offices. They are teachers, doctors, nurses, construction engineers, lawyers, sheriffs, carpenters, musicians, caregivers, among many other professions and callings, but are primarily middle-class, blue collar workers, typical of mainline Protestantism.

The parish is a part of Whittier. It is the home of the congregation. Since early on the congregation has been strong in ecumenical concerns with neighbors in our community and beyond. Interaction with other parishes, ELCA and non-ELCA, and other denominations and with the Jewish synagogue gives Salem a sense of what we have in common, instead of focusing on our differences. The pastor and people have strong bonds of friendship throughout the area. This was begun by Gerberding, expanded by Robison and maintained by Rozen. In recent years more social ministry

programs, youth involvement, and evangelical outreach have been evaluated, changed, and improved upon. More lay people of all ages are participating and because of this they are aware of the many areas of Christian witness in the ecumenical world.

Pastor Rozen has not been as active in ecumenical areas during the years of his doctoral studies at Claremont. This situation will change when the studies are complete and there is more time to work in this important and challenging area.

Especially important are maintaining and furthering relations with the Whittier Presbyterian Church and St. Mary's Catholic Church. They have been the most successful ecumenical ventures in the recent past. St. Mary's Church has called a new pastor, Father Lopez, and again there has been little opportunity presently to covenant with them.

As successful as these two ecumenical experiences have been, it is also desirable for Salem to covenant in the future with other denominations. This would extend Salem's ties with more of her neighbors, thus further strengthening the ecumenical program.

The three ELCA parishes also would benefit by more cluster activities with the congregations and pastors. Pastor Dan Knudsen of Shepherd of the Hills Parish is a newcomer to the community, and he is not known to Salem Church very well.

Despite shared past ministry experiences and joint worship times, it appears that each of these three Whittier ELCA congregations is presently

“doing its own thing.”

Recently, Dr. Roger Rogahn of the Southern California (West) Synod, has been invited to help with the Pacifica Synod's program for urban ministry. Dr. Rogahn has invited the pastors and selected congregational leaders of the three Whittier ELCA parishes to meet and discuss their visions and plans for future mission. It remains to be seen if these three congregations will take advantage of their common goals and mission to work more closely in ministry to the community. A possible result of this meeting may be a plan for a new joint program in Whittier.

An example of this cooperation is taking place in several ELCA parish clusters throughout the nation. These parish clusters are cooperating in a “council-like” ministry. Thereby realizing that each parish has specific strengths with specific programs and can support each other. These clusters cooperate in advertising, youth work, confirmation instruction, sport groups, and assisting in their communities' social service programs. In order to make this venture successful, it is stressed that there be regular contact between the pastors and lay representatives of the cooperating congregations.

The Southern California Lutheran Cursillo Movement is a recently established program which Salem has joined. This is a lay-sponsored movement to renew Lutheran Christians. In a little over two years, twenty-one Salem parishioners and the pastor have become Cursillo pilgrims. The inter-Lutheran witness among various southland parishes has been very encouraging and has given a sense of new life to participating ELCA and

Missouri Synod congregations working together. Of special significance is the fact that inter-communion takes place in these retreat locations that does not normally happen in congregational settings. Also of significance is the fact that the female ELCA pastors conduct many liturgical services and study sessions with Missouri Synod participants who do not ordain women. This is truly a grassroots example of possible changes in denominational policies in the future. Working together, being on retreat together, is a time of bonding, growth, and more understanding among the two church bodies.

Salem's Cursillo participants are actively enlisting other parishioners to become involved in this ecumenical experience. In the next two years, these Salem Cursillo pilgrims are determined to add ten to twenty more parish members in this program. The parish's benefits can be noticed by the immediate increase of parish and community ministerial opportunities by all who have been Cursillo participants.

Currently the presence of a Spanish-speaking Protestant congregation in Salem's buildings is a foretaste of what is hoped to become a strong Spanish-language, Lutheran presence. The Church of God, Seventh-Day, ministry in Salem's facilities is merely a start. The two congregations have good relations and friendship, but Salem prefers to have a Spanish-speaking Lutheran ministry present, which has been encouraged and identified by the bishop of Salem's synod. The Pacifica Synod and Salem have begun preliminary discussions for possible Spanish Lutheran work. After analysis, the results showed that the Spanish-speaking community would benefit by Spanish

Lutheran liturgies and leaders. This has given new impetus to the parish's outreach in the community. Unlike many other Protestant congregations who dread working with a minority congregation, Salem has responded to the surrounding community in beginning a ministry to Hispanics. It is unknown, however, just how the Anglo blue-collar parishioners will accept all of this.

With the large influx of Hispanics into the Whittier area, the existing churches (Catholic and Protestant) who usually appeal to this immigrant group, have not always absorbed them as members. Many of the immigrants' personal needs are not being met. The parishes are often too impersonal and some Hispanics are viewed as second-class members by the Anglos who hold leadership positions, although their numerical strengths are rapidly declining. It is hoped that a Spanish Lutheran congregation would help correct that situation.

By being a partner in this new venture, Salem would become even more inclusive by not ignoring its own roots and forgetting them, but by branching out and including others in its family.

History could repeat itself if a pastor and congregational members walked the neighborhood again--this time speaking Spanish, their primary language, in welcoming and inviting neighbors to worship at Salem Church.

Perhaps the vision of the future would again include two pastors at Salem. Two pastors of equal rank and authority in their respective congregations--English-speaking and Spanish-speaking, a co-pastorate as it were!

Remembering how Salem started as a mission congregation, very much dependent upon others (i.e. the national church body) for its early existence, this parish could study the possibility of becoming a Mission Partner in the ELCA.

This national program pairs existing, well-established congregations with a parish just beginning or still in its early development. (It is a well-known fact that present-day mission programs are very expensive and funding to begin them is in short supply.)

The ELCA would allow Salem to review various new congregations located nearby or in other areas, and pair up with one of them that is of particular need or interest. The drawback for Salem is adequate finances to carry out this program.

However, if the money problem were resolved, Salem would become a “giver congregation,” with the new mission, a “recipient congregation.” By this innovative, more personal mission approach, the giver congregations are enriched through their involvement, and the recipient congregations receive needed support and encouragement. The historical experience of the giver congregation would then be shared with a younger congregation whose own particular history is beginning. Salem’s mission history, its saga, would again be shared, studied, and celebrated.

The Church is mission. The Christian mission is a liberation movement. Christian mission means the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, neighbor, and creation.

In the opinion of the author, three essentials are needed for this mission-- to see, to grow and to serve. Each of these expresses a dimension of our response to God's graciousness in Jesus Christ. They give directions to our ministry as Christians.

To see: because the Gospel offers hope to a very troubled world and support to members in their daily lives. The church, according to parish records, has always been a counseling church. This has especially been the case under Rozen with more members of the congregation than before being counseled despite the congregation's smaller size. This could indicate there are more problems in the world now or more people are willing to ask for help today. It is probably a combination of both.

Members of the congregation are today more concerned about such things as personal health, and because of that Salem may need to "preserve the temple," (i.e. the body), in more meaningful ways. Perhaps there needs to develop more buoyancy (uplifting, positive and holistic method) groups to meet this need. (Throughout Salem's history, special interest groups addressing various age groups and genders such as youth, men's, women's and young adult groups, have functioned intermittently. Why not have a special group for Lutheran Seniors? Memberships are readily available.)

Because of natural disasters, such as the 1987 Whittier earthquake, Salem has ministered to the congregation's physical and spiritual needs as a result of human compassion. Another point to consider is the fact that the congregation is older and thus they have become more conscious of their own

frailties, therefore the need for buoyancy (to lift them up) is again important.

We commit ourselves to seeing anew what it really means to be Christian through daily reading and study of the Bible, through daily prayer and through reflection on our Lutheran heritage of faith.

To grow: because the Church is called to proclaim the Gospel to all the people in our communities using fully the abundant human and financial resources of its members. According to records, the congregation pledges less money than in the recent past. This may suggest that the older congregation, although having more money, is fearful of giving because of insecurities, health, and the unstable economic situations, etc., and may be waiting for the younger generation to take responsibility.

Although corporate growth has not taken place recently because of the change in demographics and the economic situation, there has been much personal growth in the everyday life of the parishioners.

Salem Parish commits itself to growing in its witness to the faith, in its giving, and in its intention to become a more diverse church.

To serve: the concept that the whole world is God's creation and the object of His love, has become foremost in the minds of the laity. We continue to serve in the world in the cause of peace, justice and the care of creation, building partnerships between congregations and other ministries at home and abroad.

For this writer, I feel that Christ's work of atonement is complete, but the mission to which Christ calls his disciples is not. It goes on. Our mission is not

to keep ourselves detached from the world, passively waiting for the second coming of Christ. Our mission is to care for God's creation, love all people, and declare the message of Christ's death and resurrection.

Lutheran theology teaches mission is not a burden that is laid upon the Church; it is a gift and a promise to the church that is faithful. The command arises from the gift. However, the writer feels that perhaps the laity is unaware of this and thus more educational work needs to be accomplished.

The Salem saga allows us to celebrate what really binds us together, sharing the love of God through Christ Jesus and our mission to help make the world a better place. Because of this, when the fiftieth anniversary celebration arrives, the congregation will experience a stronger unification and a sense of the history of service.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

The Introduction, Chapter 1, noted that Salem Lutheran Church, Whittier, California, was organized forty-eight years ago in 1946. Salem Church does not have a long history of ministry, but a parish does not have to be hundreds of years old to have an important history. All parishes have a start. The majority of parishes have had a modest beginning. All parishes began in a certain place, on a certain date and with certain personalities present.

These parishes came about because of what was going on, or what was not going on, in a particular time and place in the past. Just because a parish has not yet attained hundreds of years of active service, does not mean that the parish and its faithful ministry is unimportant and its story should be left untold.

In the eyes of Christian witness, any parish that is organized for the work of the Gospel of Christ is important. No race, no nation, no state, no city or rural area is more important than another. Christian mission has been and is conducted in roofless spaces in the jungles as well as cathedrals. Christian mission is performed in stadiums seating thousands, and in intimate Bible studies in a parishioner's home. It is conducted in thousands of daily work places.

Salem Church's history has not been adequately written for posterity. It is important for the congregation to know its history for continuity. It is

beneficial for the past and the future to be connected. So few accurate and analytical parish histories have been written about mainline Protestant parishes in the United States. The ELCA congregations in Southern California are especially guilty of this lack of historical awareness and exploration. The study and knowledge of past congregational ministry is valuable for constructive future ministry. These histories are instructive for other parishes to review and reflect. They are educational resources and tools. What are the similarities? What are the noticeable differences? How did certain parishes approach their various problems of changing ministry? Parishes need to know and celebrate their role in the work of Christian mission and service. Each written parish story is another glimpse, another jigsaw piece, in the total puzzle of the Church's history. Many more pieces, however, need to fit into the overall scene of Christ's Church as represented by the ELCA in Southern California. This project will provide one more piece, a little more information, for the overall picture. It is an important piece for there are so many more histories similar to Salem's. They need to be written. They can be written.

Let me review the story, the saga, of Salem Church.

Chapter 2 of this history concentrates on the buildings and growth of Salem. Salem Lutheran Church, Whittier, California, started as a mission congregation of the United Lutheran Church in America to the newly developed, bustling neighborhood of West Whittier. The congregation began without its own facilities. It started in rented quarters in an upper hall over a dance studio. Immediately upon Pastor Robison's arrival, another temporary

meeting place had to be found. This time it was in a Moose Lodge with the head of a large moose above a door, overlooking the assembled worshipers each Sunday, from its place of honor. Eventually, a massive pledging and construction program began. The first sanctuary was built. Then began a series of other building campaigns and construction. This all happened as the young congregation was growing with hundreds of parishioners and Sunday School students sharing cramped facilities. The problem eased with the larger, second sanctuary being constructed and dedicated in 1961. This was the last building that needed to be constructed. By this time the congregation had reached its membership peak.

A Lutheran parish is made up of clergy and laity serving together. Chapters 3 and 4 of this history are devoted to describing the distribution and division of Christian ministry between clergy and parishioners at Salem.

Chapter 3 describes the leadership roles of Salem's three pastors. Each of the three pastors has had different challenges and tasks to perform. All three pastors worked diligently to keep the parish community alive and faithful in its proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world, in the administration of the holy sacraments and in service to God and neighbors. In all three pastorates, buildings are only a means to enable the mission of the congregation to serve God. The buildings, once completed, are not the end of the story.

The ministry of the laity is described in Chapter 4. As Lutherans, we believe that all baptized are priests. Ordained people have their ministry and

the non-ordained have their ministry, as well. Both groups make up a congregation and can and do service to God. God is honored by this inclusive ministry. This chapter tells how many areas of concentration have been selected through the years to carry out this labor of love by the laity. But the laity, like the clergy, cannot rest on their laurels. Changes in Salem's parish membership, parish size and neighborhood demand more lay responsibility and initiative.

In Chapter 5 the vital role of worship is remembered. The Liturgy is "the work of the people of God." Worship of God happens, however, not only in Divine Service, but in our lives as we leave the sanctuary to face the world. It is important to do something with our worship.

Salem Church's worship is Bible-based, traditional, and Lutheran. But that does not mean stagnation. Worship experiences in the parish are varied to minister to the changing needs and wants of the congregation.

Salem Church believes that worship should not hinder a person's relationship to God, but worship should assist and direct a person's understanding of God and His will for each of us.

Few pastors will encourage members "to go and visit another parish in the city next Sunday, please!" Chapter 6 shares this pastoral recommendation to the Salem congregation whenever the churches of the city share in the ecumenical Pew Exchange Sunday.

Salem Church, with its three pastors at the lead, has a good track record of ecumenical dialogs, studies, worship and fellowship. Particularly

meaningful parish participation in several ecumenical events is shared in this chapter of Salem's saga.

Chapter 7 concludes the history of this forty-eight-year-old parish's mission thus far. The history of Salem has been a busy, colorful, varied, extroverted and stable ministry. The parish has been traditional, yet innovative.

Salem Church is well aware of the changing conditions in many areas of Southern California. The city of Whittier is not the same quiet place of solitude that it was forty-eight years ago. There are empty stores, areas of blight, many crowded schools and half-filled churches. (There are people in the city.) More people call Whittier home now than ever before in its history. Young white families are no longer in the majority. Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the Whittier area. Often younger families cannot afford to buy a home in Whittier. Despite this, immigrants and illegal aliens are moving into crowded conditions from East Los Angeles.

The major obstacle in the early 1990s to begin a new ministry and mission to the Salem neighborhood is a lack of money, in the congregation and in the synod. It is the hope of Salem's Council, Pastor and congregation that God will continue to be served and worshiped here in the future. Whether the ministry and building would still be Lutheran supported and staffed was a question of the author before I began writing this story. Now after studying the story I am much more hopeful for the future.

A correction needs to be made. As Salem Church soon will celebrate its

half-century mark there must be an addition to the story. One more building has to be built.

As the pastor of Salem Church, and as part of the story of this parish, I am contributing my building for the parish by the construction of an edifice, by this project, this paper.

Salem Lutheran Church will celebrate its fiftieth birthday in two years. It will be a birthday event! It will not be a wake, and certainly not a funeral! It will be a festive, sharing and exciting time by remembering the past, giving thanks for the present and looking with excited anticipation towards the future.

"This Is Your Life," Salem Lutheran Church, Whittier, California. Soli Deo Gloria!

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. (Ps. 127:1)

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